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**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE**



**Sony's
3D projector**

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The future of home entertainment revealed, p22

WELCOME

What's the future of home entertainment? We've already seen it, so if you want the inside story on the connected technology, 3D products, amazing slim panels and groovy portable media systems we'll be enjoying next year, turn straight to page 22 for our in-depth report from the IFA 2010 Show.



This issue you can also lap up an **exclusive preview of Sony's first 3D projector**. If 3D hasn't convinced you on

TV, this beamer may bring you around. Find out on page 46.

For bargain buys, you can't beat 32in TVs, but our group test sorts the cream from the dregs... check it out on page 84.

Plus, there are reviews of Samsung's entry-level AVR, some superb PSB speakers, killer subwoofers from XTZ and Paradigm, and Onkyo's super sound system to absorb, so you'll hardly have time to enter this issue's fantastic competitions. Better start reading right now!

Chris Jenkins

Editor

TEAM HCC

Chris Jenkins:
Our ISF-calibrated Editor used to run Future's Tech Laboratories



Mark Craven:
HCC's Deputy Editor cut his teeth on the Sub's bench for five years



Anton van Beek:
News Ed. Anton began his pro-videophile career over 11 years ago



Jill Lubetkin:
HCC's Prod Ed. is new to the mag, but a stalwart figure of the AV department



Kevin Emden:
Has been invested with the much-coveted white coat of HCC's Tech Labs



John Rook:
Art Editor John first worked on HCC back in 1999, when TVs were made of wood



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£6,000 of
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HCC gets to grips with Internet TV and finds out what it means for home cinema enthusiasts. Plus, all of the hottest kit from the IFA tech show



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Panasonic TX-32S20

Samsung LE-32C580

Sharp LC-32DH510F

Sony KDL-32NX503

Toshiba 32AV713

TECH LABS

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Equipment reviewed in *Home Cinema Choice* is measured and quantified by Future Tech Labs, which for more than 15 years has set the standard for independent AV test & measurement. The findings of the Tech Labs are used to underpin the subjective opinions of our Reviews team, ensuring that you receive the best possible advice when it comes to planning your next purchase



CO-STARRING

This issue's team of expert writers are the best qualified in the business

Adam Rayner:

The UK's foremost expert in extreme audio writes about bass, hi-fi and cartoons



Richard Stevenson:

Industry veteran and former Editor of UK CE trade journal ERT



Danny Phillips:

Former editor of *What Video & High-Definition TV* and dedicated AV boffin



Martin Pipe:

Technology specialist. Martin co-developed HCC's Tech Lab operation



John Archer:

The UK's most experienced TV tester cut his teeth as an early HCC staffer



Adrian Justins:

Made his name as the editor of *What Video & TV* and *What Home Cinema*



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BULLETIN

→ **News highlights** **SONY PUSHES 3D FEATURES** Dearth of titles could be rectified in the new year **LOEWE** German brand boards the 3DTV band wagon **TOY STORY 3** Your favourite toolbox characters back on Blu-ray **DEMO'D** One-stop guide to the AV highlights of *Robin Hood: Director's Cut* **TANNOY REVAMPED** New Mercury cinema speakers unveiled **AND MORE!**

This time it's personal

Samsung P1000 Galaxy Tab → www.samsung.com/uk/galaxytab



Samsung is hoping to revolutionise the world of personal media players with its P1000 Galaxy Tab. Described as 'a smart media device', this Android 2.2-powered rival to Apple's iPad is the first in the world to receive DivX certification, enabling users to enjoy DivX HD content on its 7in 1,024 x 600 display. Weighing just 380g and measuring 19 x 120 x 12mm, the Galaxy Tab will launch on November 1, priced around £800. Features include 16GB of internal storage, handsfree phone functionality, front-facing 3Mp camera, 3G HSPA connectivity, 802.11n wi-fi, Flash playback and more.

HCC Online...

Looking for breaking AV news, blogs, features, & reviews? For your daily fix visit us at www.homecinemachoice.com Follow us on Twitter @hccmag

V is for Mercury

Tannoy Mercury V loudspeakers → www.tannoy.com



For the fifth generation of its best-selling Mercury series of loudspeakers, Tannoy claims to have 'revised and upgraded' the technologies developed for its Mercury F Custom range to offer 'classic-leading performance at a budget price'. Consisting of the Mercury V1 standmount (£150 pr), the V4 floorstander (£380 pr), the dedicated VC centre (£130) and the compact wall-mount VR rear speaker (£140 pr), the Mercury V series improves on the Mercury F Custom with larger cabinets for a deeper bass response, a new soft-dome tweeter and the addition of silver-plated wiring and enhanced Differential Material Technology (DMT) damping to improve crossover. Available in sugar maple or dark walnut finishes.

Partner with...

Anthem MRX700

High-end 3D Ready AVR,
£1,500 approx



The MRX700 is part of audio specialist Anthem's long-awaited debut range of AV receivers. Fully compatible with 3DTVs and source components, this AVR behemoth promises 120W across each of its seven channels, Anthem Room Correction, four HDMI inputs/one output, 1080p upconversion with Deep Color support, internet radio via Ethernet, front and rear USB inputs and a two-channel zone.

www.anthemavs.co.uk

Wide boys



Klipsch's Synergy Series loudspeakers are synonymous with lifelike and dynamic audio reproduction at affordable prices. The company is now unleashing a re-engineered range of speakers in the UK that have 'new high-frequency components'. The lineup consists of the F-30 (£798 pr), F-20 (£598 pr) and F-10 (£398 pr) floorstanders, the B-20 (£298 pr) bookshelf model, C-20 (£200 ea) and C-10 (£150) centre channels and S-20 (£398 pr) and S-10 (£298) surround speakers featuring Wide Dispersion tech.

www.klipsch.co.uk

3D upgrade



Arcam is offering owners of its FMJ lineup of AVRs and processors a 3D upgrade path. The update for the AVR600, AVR500 and AV888 models will launch in the first quarter of next year at an as-yet undisclosed price. Arcam MD Charlie Brennan claims, 'many customers ... are confused about the benefits of 3D and so far the consensus has been to adopt a wait and see approach. So we are designing and building a new video board that can offer a bypass option for use with HD 3D signals.'

www.arcam.co.uk

Artis for art's sake



The Pacific 3 SA is the latest addition to Cabasse's Artis range of high-end loudspeakers. And not only does the brand's first tower speaker feature the BC17 coaxial drive unit developed for the Riga design speaker, but it's also complemented by two 8in low-frequency units based on the technology developed for Cabasse's flagship £108,000 La Sphere. These drive units are actively driven by a built-in 450W amplifier. The £11K Pacific 3 SA speakers are available now in a choice of piano black or pearl finishes.

www.cabasse.com/ent

Panasonic's 3D blow-out

No holds barred for HD 3D brand leader as it unveils more products

Panasonic's IFA 2010 press conference was dominated by stereoscopic technology. Such is the company's commitment to 3D that, rather than just have attendees sit in an auditorium observing the stage, *HCC* joined European journalists around one of the 54 3D plasma TVs in the room, which displayed a mixture of 3D video clips and live broadcast material from the stage presentation.

Panasonic's £1,500 HDC-SDT750, the world's first AVCHD 3D consumer camcorder (previewed in *HCC* Issue 186) was a major talking point. The company also took the occasion to reveal that it was adding three new 3DTVs to its existing lineup, in the form of the TX-P42VT20 (£1,800) and TX-P46VT20 (£2,000) in the VT20 series and the TX-P42GT20 (£1,500) as the first in a new range of 3D plasmas.

However, the new 3DTVs did manage to surprise us by including the very same integrated 2D-to-3D conversion technology that the manufacturer had spoken out against in the past. Speaking exclusively to *HCC*, Hirotohi Uehara,



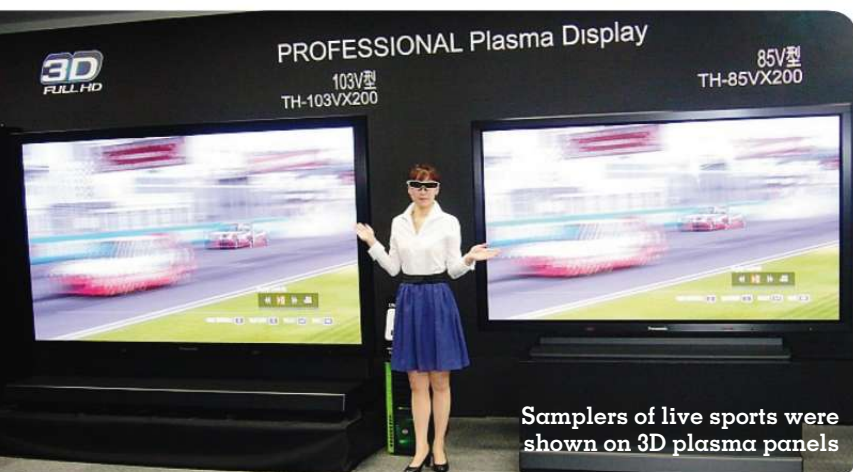
Panasonic's Hirotohi Uehara says 2D-to-3D conversion makes up for lack of native 3D content

Director, TV BU, Visual Products and Display Devices Business Group, AVC Networks Company, Panasonic Co. Ltd., admitted that part of the reason for this was to counter the shortage of native 3D material currently available to watch on them. However, Mr Uehara was bullish, stating, 'From the quality point of view, of course, it's difficult to provide the perfect 3D effect this way. It's taken longer to arrive, but our technology is much better at converting 2D to 3D.'

Another source of 3D content was revealed with the confirmation that the Acetrax video-on-demand service currently provided through VieraCast functions on its TVs would begin offering 3D film content for download in 2011. Quite how this will work in the UK, given the issues with bandwidth and download speeds on these shores, has yet to be addressed, and it's impossible to judge the quality from the shorter tasters that attendees were shown.

There were clear artefact issues with the 3D trailer for *The Last Airbender* we saw, although the film was criticised for the quality of its rushed 2D-to-3D converted visuals when shown at cinemas, and a trailer can't show the overall film quality.

Mr Uehara clearly believes that 3DTVs and Blu-ray players played a key part in Panasonic's 135 per cent year-on-year global sales growth.



Playlist...

Team *HCC* reveals its Playback picks of the last month

1 The Avengers: The Complete Series 5 (R2 DVD)

The first season of the cult spy-fi series shot in colour, and with the usual great extras from Optimum. *CJ*



2 Hachi: A Dog's Tale (Region B BD)



Based on a true story, this is the saddest film you'll ever see. *MC*

3 The Libertine (R2 DVD)



This tale of 17th century debauchery may have an unsaturated palette, but it more than compensates with colourful language. *JL*

4 Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood – Part 1 (Region B BD)



A stunning re-working of the classic manga hit, plus a wacky J-pop soundtrack. *JR*

5 Modern Family: Season One (R2 DVD)



Twenty four episodes of the freshest, funniest sitcom around, in one handy DVD boxset. *AvB*

Demo'd!

The AV highlights of...
Robin Hood:
Cut on Blu-ray

Sacré bleu!



20.43: King Richard's siege at Chalus Castle provides the first taste of this disc's thunderous DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 soundtrack. The pounding bass accompanying every blow of the battering ram takes your breath away.

Port of call



41.31: The scene with the boat carrying King Richard's body back from France arriving in England provides an excellent showcase for the AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode. The sharpness, fine details, colour saturation and texturing gives the main shot a three-dimensional sense of depth.

I predict a riot



109.20: Epic crowd scenes are always good for testing how well a hi-def encode holds up, and this establishing shot of the troops massing at Barnsdale instantly impresses with a clarity that ensures that each and every soldier is clearly delineated from those surrounding him.

Up from the depths



140.31: The entirety of the final fight with the invading French forces is a *tour de force* of spectacularly dynamic positional audio and low-end effects.

Colour balancing act

Baz Luhrmann reveals his approach to remastering Blu-rays

'It's actually quite disturbing. You start to see things you didn't see in the original print'. Auteur director Baz L HCC about the migration of *Moulin Rouge!* and *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* to Blu-ray. We've been invited to a retreat in the Hollywood Hills, steeped in celluloid history, to talk about the power of Blu-ray, which seems appropriate.

Luhrmann says that what he has tried to do with both releases is capture a sense of the past on Blu-ray.

'With both films I tried to recreate that MGM-style tri-colour reds and blues,' he reveals. 'I feel that we have been able to arrive closer at that goal with BD'. The three-strip Technicolor process, famed for its saturated primaries, was notoriously difficult to use. However remastering the movies for Blu-ray enabled Luhrmann to replicate the look, in order to get even closer to his original vision. 'I went through the movie shot by shot, beat by beat, doing colour correction. It's a meticulous process, taking out a little cyan here or magenta there. Each frame for me evokes emotions and memories. The process has been quite lovely.'

A new digital intermediate was created for both the movies in question, which offered plenty of scope for creative tinkering. The temptation, says the director, is not to go too far.

'The question is when is something part of the language of the film and when does it take you out of the picture because it's just not good? When it comes to Blu-ray you



Baz Luhrmann: The HD format helped him give the pictures a retro feel

can change just about anything. When I made these films, the cinematic language was

constrained by circumstance. I know that in the original, the gas station sequence in *...Romeo + Juliet*, the sky varies between perfect blue and white. During the remastering process I evened it out, so that it was all blue. But then it started to feel wrong. So we ended up adding only a little blue to the white sky. As a result I feel that the Blu-ray is different but still familiar, yet it has more depth.'

Blu-ray is not the same as a celluloid print, or even DVD, says the director.

'It definitely has a feeling of both, but the result is more filmic. But sometimes the new medium is just too sharp. The fact that the film was shot soft means that you might need to go and degenerate the sharpness of the medium. There are painted backdrops that look great on film because the medium is softening and reflective. On Blu-ray disc that illusion can be broken. What we are trying to create with these films is real artificiality.'

'There's this old saying: you never finish a film, it's taken away from you. And for me, that's very true'.

Remastered: *Romeo + Juliet* (top) and *Moulin Rouge!*



Great Scott



Over in the US, Universal Studios has revealed that the potential cult-hit *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The*

World is coming to a DVD and Blu-ray Combo. The BD will be a particular treat for fans, serving up a 1080p 1.85:1 encode, DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio, four commentaries, deleted scenes, alternate footage, a 'TV Safe' version of the film, production blogs, visual effects and sound featurettes, plus lots more. For a limited time, consumers will also have instant access to stream the films *Tremors* or *Pitch Black* via BD-Live, smartphone or computer. www.scottpilgrimthemovie.com

'I pity the fool'



Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment unleashes its blockbuster remake

of *The A-Team* on November 29. The DVD offers up a Digital Copy, director's commentary and *A-Team Highlights Mash-Up Montage*, while the Blu-ray Triple Play Edition (featuring a BD, DVD and Digital Copy) adds a 15min longer cut of the film, deleted scenes, a gag reel, the *Plan of Attack* Making of... featurette, six Character Chronicles, a special effects featurette and an interactive behind-the-scenes featurette with director Joe Carnahan. www.ateam-movie.com

Geezer pleaser



Good news for fans of Eighties-style action movies: Lionsgate Home Entertainment has confirmed that

it's bringing *The Expendables* to DVD and Blu-ray in the UK on December 13. Details are scarce at the moment, with the company only teasing that the 'awesome extras' will include a commentary from writer/director/star Sylvester Stallone, behind-the-scenes featurettes and interviews. And there's no news of whether it will include the Director's Cut Stallone has spoken about several times, or if this will be saved for a later release. www.expendablesmovie.co.uk



Fun and games

Toy Story 3 → Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment
→ R2 DVD & Region B BD

Buzz Lightyear and Woody struck box office gold for a third time this Summer with the long-awaited cinema release of this sensational computer-animated feature. And fans won't have to wait long to watch it all over again, with Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment bringing *Toy Story 3* to DVD and BD in the UK on November 22. The latter is available as Double Play (two-disc Blu-ray, plus the DVD) and Triple Play (two-disc Blu-ray, plus the DVD and a Digital Copy) editions. The Blu-rays also pack in a wealth of extras, including a CineExplore commentary, a Beyond the Toybox: Alternate Commentary track, behind-the-scenes featurettes, an interactive game, *Day & Night* short animation and more.

Premiere

HCC's guide to what's happening in the world of TV and films...

Blast from the past

James Cameron and Lightstorm Entertainment are developing a TV series based on his 1994 blockbuster *True Lies*. Twentieth Century Fox TV is producing and the show has been picked up in the US by the ABC network.

Belief in Godzilla



Producer Brian Rogers recently dropped some tantalising hints about Legendary Pictures' upcoming *Godzilla* reboot. As well as claiming that Legendary wants to reinvigorate the giant reptile like it previously did with Batman in *Batman Begins*, he also stated that fans could look forward to *Godzilla* getting back to basics and fighting other monsters in the flick.

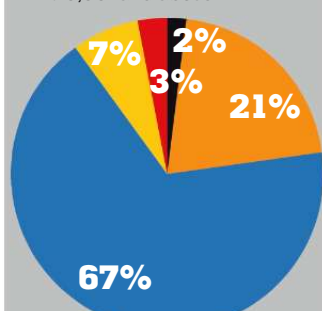
Attila vs WMD?

Paramount has hired Shawn Levy to turn the TV series *Deadliest Warrior* into a film. This pseudo-scientific show pits two different historical or contemporary warriors against each other in a bloody clash and tries to figure out who'd win.

We asked...

What's the most you've ever spent on a single AV product?

- Less than £300
- £300-£1,000 ■ £1,001-£5,000
- £5,001-£10,000
- £10,001 and above



Results from www.homecinemachoice.com
Go online for more polling action

Sony will pitch 3D HD to retail

Company avoids software bundling deals in favour of more multi-genre 3D Blu-ray content that will be made available to buy

Sony Pictures Home Entertainment made waves back in June with the first commercial 3D Blu-ray release, *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*. While other studios continue to jump into bed with manufacturers to provide 3D Blu-ray titles as exclusives for hardware bundles, and following the recent retail debut of the 3D Blu-ray of *Monster House*, Sony Pictures appears committed to ensuring that there is also content on shop shelves for people to buy once they've invested in a new 3DTV and Blu-ray player.

'For us, it was really important to make sure that we had content not only available for the TVs but also for retailers,' stated Rich Marty, VP, new business development, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. Talking exclusively to *HCC* at the recent IFA expo in Berlin, Marty revealed that there was no pressure from the studio's parent company to make content available exclusively in bundles with its own 3D tech.

'To grow the market you have to put something out there. And Sony was in agreement with us, saying "We understand that you need to have retail product as well,"' he explained.

Of course, that's not to say that bundling isn't being explored by Sony Pictures. Alongside the *Monster House* announcement at IFA was confirmation of plans to bundle a 3D Blu-ray version of Michael Jackson's *This Is It* with Sony kit in the future. 'That is a bundle-only piece because it only has a select amount of 3D content in it. That's why we're calling it a 3D Enhanced Edition,' revealed Marty.

But while he can't speak for other studios, the Sony Pictures VP believes that the 3D Blu-ray disc market will pick up in the run up to Christmas. 'We've already released *Cloudy...* and *Monster*



Rich Marty: Sony Pictures' VP, new business development says 2011 will bring more 3D BDs to shops

House, Open Season's on the horizon, *Resident Evil: Afterlife*

is coming early next year. So we should have four or five titles in the market by January. With what other studios have talked about, I would hope that there'll be something in the neighbourhood of 15 titles available at retail by the end of the year'.

And Marty assured us that it won't all be animated kids' films for the foreseeable future. 'We know there needs to be a blend of live-action and animation, and that's why we're working on the FIFA World Cup disc. There are a lot of approval processes to go through with FIFA, but we're targeting the end of the year.

After that, we're going to have *Resident Evil: Afterlife*, that'll be our first day-and-date 2D and 3D title. But it's all just a matter of title availability.'



Monster House (above) and Resident Evil: Afterlife lead the 3D BD charge

Loewe gets 3D bug



German premium AV brand Loewe is about to debut a 3DTV. Scheduled for release early in 2011,

alongside the brand's first 3D Blu-ray player, the full HD LCD screen will utilise active-shutter tech alongside LED backlighting and 400Hz picture processing, with the brand claiming that 'the luminosity and high picture frequency of the display makes it perfect for showing 3D content'. Loewe also claims to be 'working intensively on new technologies where glasses are not required'. www.loewe-int.de

Beam it up



Designed to bring internet video content to every TV, Veebeam is a 1080p media player that

uses a USB antenna and a box that plugs into your TV. Two modes can either stream the entire PC desktop to the TV or only specific video files. The software is compatible with Windows 7 or Vista and Mac OS X 10.5/10.6, and content is transmitted via a wireless USB link. It's available as SD (£100) and HD (£140) models. The latter adds HDMI, Digital Audio and two USB ports to the SD's composite AV outputs. www.veebeam.com

Trailer blazer



'British Digital TV switchover specialist' TVonics has

released its first Freeview HD recorder, the DTR-HD500. Available from the company's online store, as well as a high street stores including John Lewis, Comet and Sainsbury's, the 500GB DTR-HD500 will set you back around £280 and features trailer recording, enabling you to record programmes as soon as the trailer appears. Other features include twin tuners, twin HDMI inputs, two USB ports and 1080p upscaling of SD content. www.tvonics.com

This month's top 10 news stories in handy, bite-sized chunks...



1 2D to 3D is the devil's work

Cult filmmaker Joe Dante is the latest director to rail against the practice of converting 2D films into 3D. Speaking exclusively to HCC while in

London to promote his latest film, *The Hole*, shot in native 3D, Dante stated, 'There's an art to shooting in 3D... an art that I might add is not being used in the movies that are being converted to 3D after they've been shot. These are basically a way to rip off the public without doing the work... they're going to kill 3D.'

2 Buccaneers hack HDCP

Internet pirates successfully contravened the Digital Content Protection (HDCP) DRM scheme intended to protect hi-def content via streaming and Blu-ray. Intel confirmed that the DRM's 'master key' had been leaked online in September, but experts claim that the pirates would have to start manufacturing custom devices that mimic an HDCP-authorized device to take advantage of it.

3 Online kills video chain

US video rental chain Blockbuster filed for bankruptcy towards the end of September. It has been struggling to keep up with increased competition from online services and has \$1.46billion of debt. However, the company also claims to have \$102billion in assets, and hopes that filing for Chapter 11 protection means that it can refinance and continue as a going concern. The UK company, which trades separately, should not be affected.

4 3D gets guidelines

The v3.50 firmware update that enables 3D Blu-ray playback on the PS3 arrived last month, but may prove a letdown for true home cinema fans. Disappointingly, with this update, DTS-HD and Dolby TrueHD aren't supported on the PS3 when playing 3D BDs and lossy versions are output instead.

5 Universal swaps BD

The world of 3DTV could face a major change next year, following the announcement from 3D tech company RealD that the passive glasses system it's been using in 3D cinemas could make a domestic appearance as early as next year. Licensees (rumoured to include Sony and Panasonic) will make use of the company's ZScreen wizardry, which involves an addition to a TV screen's panel in order to alternate circular polarisation. So, while the passive glasses will be much cheaper,

the additional panel technology could push 3DTV prices ever higher.

6 Microsoft's schadenfreude

Clearly still smarting after backing the wrong horse in the HD DVD and Blu-ray format war, UK Xbox boss Stephen McGill believes that the format is 'being passed by' in favour of downloads. 'We offer full HD 1080p Blu-ray-quality streaming instantly, no download, no delay. So, who needs Blu-ray?' claimed the Microsoft bigwig, despite being completely wrong on almost every count.

7 Hand signals for Sky player

Have you always wished that you could control your TV with *Minority Report*-style hand gestures? Well, Sky and Microsoft are right there with you, confirming that they have been working together to ensure that Sky Player on the Xbox 360 will work with the gesture-based Kinect controller when it launches in the UK.

8 Mash up

Project Canvas has finally been given an official name that sounds more like something you might actually want to use to watch internet TV services. The new name is YouView, which is exactly what you'd expect from a platform that essentially

mashes together YouTube and Freeview..

9 Use your brains

Projector specialist Epson appears to be suffering from an identity crisis. Speaking to HCC, MD Chris Price revealed that only 17 per cent of respondents to a survey knew about the company's Japanese heritage, with most presuming it was American. If you've any suggestions for how they can turn this around, put your ideas on a postcard and send them to him.

10 UEFA cup puller

Sharp used its IFA press conference to announce that it had just signed a sponsorship agreement with football body UEFA to become a top partner and support events including UEFA Euro 2012. At this point, the head honchos from Sharp were joined on stage by the delightful Miss IFA.



Web chat

Xbox downloads take on Blu-ray on the HCC website



Make something new!

'Microsoft claiming you can stream full HD 1080p at Blu-ray quality instantly is a blatant lie. First, it's certainly not Blu-ray quality and second, it's certainly not instantaneous. That is unless, you have plugged an optical gigabit Ethernet cable directly at the back of the server which is streaming the content. And what about content? discs that have been published so far available now as instant download? never be so 'cause MS won't be able to strike a deal with all the studios, especially not for quality 1080p. If Apple can't, why would MS be more lucky?

Downloads are best

'The best compromise I can see at the moment is a Sony Blu-ray player. Why? download films direct from LOVEFiLM and watch 'instantly'. If you want the quality go and buy the disk, if you are bored on the sofa with a streaming cold hit download. A great solution and it can't be long until LOVEFiLM expand this service to other devices too.'

Blu-ray under threat

'While I don't agree that digital downloads will replace Blu-ray anytime soon, I DO think that Blu-ray faces a real threat from more compact and agile formats such as USB 3.0 and SDXC. The world is migrating to tech that is more mobile and versatile – Blu-ray could become the SACD of film formats.'

Streaming HD

'A blatant attempt to push Microsoft's agenda. Rubbish the opposition and then sell you their new gizmo. The UK broadband infrastructure is behind many Third World countries; it may be some time before streaming HD is a reality for the majority of the population. It saddens me when MP3s and low quality downloads are preferred'.

News x10

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POINT OF VIEW

To purge **Richard Stevenson** of his damaging existential angst, we have let him use his column as a form of therapeutic primal scream. Again

Following recent missives in this column, I was accosted at an industry event and accused of being a grumpy old git. I resent being called a git, but it *does* seem high time to list my Top 10 AV grievances and note who, come the revolution, will be first against the wall.

In tenth place is the mass media hype around 3D TV. It's pants, doesn't improve the film, and won't catch on while you have to wear glasses. Give it up TV makers, Sky, terrestrial broadcasters, film producers and... Oh, I seem to be outnumbered on that one.

Anyway, the number nine spot is reserved for film producers. Any new Blu-ray disc that emerges without a True HD or DTS MA soundtrack in 7.1 channel should be used as a beer coaster and then returned to the publisher for a refund.

Eighth place is an old and well-aided bugbear. It's product specifications that bear little or no resemblance to reality. **Oh, how we laugh when comparing spec sheets with our Tech Labs results on amps from Onkyo, Pioneer, Sony, Yamaha...**

Seventh slot on the list is a techy gripe reserved for the Audyssey auto set-up. Audyssey is set to balance the system at an 80dB reference level. If you use moderately efficient speakers, you will get -8dB cut or more on every channel. With really efficient speakers you will hit Audyssey's -12dB cut limit on multiple channels, meaning it can't then set relative levels. C'mon Audyssey, give us the option of using front main speaker response as reference level, not an arbitrary 80dB.

In sixth place is any amp maker that includes Dolby ProLogic IIz and doesn't fit nine channel amps or at least a 9.1 RCA output. I'm quite old-school in my penal ideas so offending CEOs should be hanged from Tower Bridge, and drawn and quartered for the delectation of the crows.

Mid point in the hall of shame goes to big PR agencies. Having been in the industry for over 20

years, I don't need to be told how great a product is by a fluffy, 22-year-old graduate called Tamara or Saffy. I'm too old.

The dubious honour of fourth place is reserved for forums, particularly those dedicated to home cinema. Fun to read and interact with, but any source of information that is 5 per cent fact, 20 per cent fiction and 75 per cent ego is no use to anyone. Well, other than Tamara, perhaps.

Podium of Hate

The bronze medal goes to Bose for threatening to sue me twice, (possibly now three times). Not for having major issues with their products (which I do), but because they have copyrighted the word 'lifestyle' – a word I've used twice in print to refer generically to one-box home cinema systems.

Runner up, and approaching serious red-mist territory are the makers of ultra-compact satellite speaker systems. Yes, those pesky little pods the size of a cat's testicles with micro-drivers that are claimed to offer top quality, room-filling surround sound. Bamboozling the public and ignoring mid-bass is just not funny anymore, guys. You know who you are...

And finally, numero uno, which not only gets my gander, but has it running headless around the farm clucking hysterically: it's press junkets. Specifically those where the magazine editor is invited on some lavish product launch jolly, but fails to invite the hard-pressed freelancer who actually has to review the thing. This appears to happen at all press junkets these days. My passport has more dust on it than a Betamax VCR and I've become a grumpy old git because I haven't been spoon-fed champagne and canapés in some exotic location for years. For the few manufacturers or PR agencies I haven't managed to upset, my diary is clear until Christmas ●

What gets your AV goat, goose or favoured farmyard animal? Let us know what you think: email hcc@futurenet.com

Richard Stevenson likes to speak his mind on AV issues. Indeed, history may reappraise him as a fearless champion of truth. Equally, it may not





TIME MACHINES

This month, a nostalgic **Martin Pipe** asks if rear-projection TVs were the true behemoths of the TV world

If you wanted full-on home cinema in the mid 90s, there was only one way to go: LaserDisc player, Pro-Logic amp, surround-sound speakers and, for that big-screen experience, a rear-projection TV. Today, we're spoilt by 42in and 50in 'hang-on-the-wall' LCDs and plasmas. But back then, these were the province of science fiction. The average TV had a 25in direct-view 4:3 CRT. You could buy sets with a 33in tube, but they were very expensive and needed several men to lift them. The RPTV that became the large screen of choice didn't use a single tube.

Instead, a weighty box contained three small monochrome tubes and lenses, one for each primary colour. These tubes pointed upwards, their focal point being an angled precision mirror mounted above. Here, the red, green and blue elements of the image were combined and then reflected to a flat Fresnel lens and screen mounted at the front of the set. But you could buy monochrome RPTVs back in the late 1930s. Their key component was a Schmidt optical system and a tiny, high-powered tube energised by a high-voltage EHT source that was a nightmare for service technicians. Once refined, these same technologies formed the basis of the colour models that were to follow.

Home of the broad screens

Popularised in the US, where the average suburban home had space for one of these floor-standing beasts, typical RPTV screen sizes ranged from a modest 48in to a gargantuan 61in.

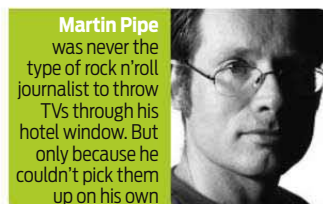
To enjoy RPTV pictures, you had to compromise. Firstly, those red, green and blue pictures had to be carefully aligned. Failure to do so yielded convergence errors, and the colour 'fringes' that were their subjective residue. RPTVs also contained a lot of highly complex circuitry to shape the waveforms that drove each tube's scanning coils, not least because the optical

path distorted the picture. Such correction was needed to ensure a reasonable picture. Earlier RPTVs had banks of presets and, naturally, the settings tended to drift. Periodic realignment by a competent technician was needed. RPTVs showing sport were common sights in pubs, and poor maintenance meant that many pictures were dire. When digital took over those presets were replaced by 'electronic screwdrivers'. The final 16:9 CRT-based RPTVs, notably from Sony and Hitachi, carried out automatic calibration.

Pub-goers and home cinema enthusiasts were also familiar with another rear-projection shortcoming – the viewing angle. The best pictures, which were always fairly soft when compared to conventional CRTs, were only seen if viewed 'head on'. **Another problem came with broadcasters' idiotic love affair with static logos.** Some of this onscreen graffiti was excessively bright, and the hard-driven mini-tubes of an RPTV didn't take to it. If these channels were viewed for long, the logos could be etched into the tubes' phosphors, leaving their ghosts behind.

Well into the new millennium, rear-projection made its last 'mass market' stand. New converts such as JVC and Sagem built hi-def compatible RPTVs around new technologies like D-ILA and DLP – a single halogen lamp providing the backlight. These were more resistant to screenburn, but the problems of bulk and restricted viewing angle remained. By this time, though, the considerably less bulky LCD and plasma panels accounted for the lion's share of large screen TV sales and RPTVs were going the way of the dinosaur. However, rear projection may not yet be completely extinct. In the US, Mitsubishi sells a 3D-capable, hi-def RPTV based around lasers...

What are your memories of rear-projection? Drop us a line at hcc@futurenet.co.uk



Martin Pipe was never the type of rock n'roll journalist to throw TVs through his hotel window. But only because he couldn't pick them up on his own

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TECH TANTRUM

Barry Fox thinks that 3D is getting ahead of itself – especially when you hear the words before the lips have moved

It was no surprise to find the IFA show halls in Berlin knee-deep in 3D. How else can the manufacturers get us to replace recently bought HD screens?

Most 3D sets look pretty much the same, except the Philips' 21:9 Cinema LCD TVs, which can now show 3D. Philips' exclusive right to the basic panels, which are produced by Sharp, has now ended so it will be interesting to see who else adopts the cinema wide format.

Panasonic and Sony both held their press conferences in 3D. The former dotted 50 3D plasma sets around the room and had to hand out many hundreds of pairs of active shutter glasses.

Each pair costs £100, so the end of the Panasonic event conference turned a bit sour when a hired squad of German jobsworths made sure no-one left without giving back their glasses.

Sony solved the cost problem by projecting 3D images of the speeches onto a huge screen over the podium, using cinema-style passive polarisation, which needs only inexpensive sunglass-like specs.

However, the complex video processing needed to project 3D delayed the pictures, but not the sound. So when Sony's top boss, Sir Howard Stringer, was proclaiming Sony's expertise, the sound of his voice arrived ahead of his 3D images. This is something that never happens in nature – where sound always arrives a bit late – so the effect is very disturbing.

When the classical piano star Lang Lang was brought on as a surprise guest to thump tunes on a Steinway grand, we saw him performing the even more disturbing trick of playing notes before hitting the keys.

Add to this the eye-wrenching sight of soccer and golf balls flying out of the screen and it's not surprising a lot of people were taking off their

glasses, ignoring the screen and just watching the stage. Real world human vision does, after all, do a pretty good job of providing pictures in 3D.

Whenever 3D is mentioned someone is sure to predict that no-glasses autostereoscopic 3D is just around the corner. No it isn't. It can be made to work quite well, but it costs far too much.

Growing panes

This was best summed up by an impressive Philips demo at IFA. Until mid-2009, Philips funded an 'incubator project' called 3D Solutions in Eindhoven to develop autostereo TV screens. The project was shut down because the panels were too expensive for consumer use. But Philips hung onto the patents and has now licensed Dimenco, a startup company run by eight ex-Philips employees, to make the screens.

The original Philips screen used a 1,920 x 1,080 HD panel covered with a vertical grid of lenticular strip lenses; the image was sliced into nine views, ranging from extreme left to right. Viewers got a 3D effect – in 1/9 the resolution of HD – over a fairly tightly-defined viewing angle.

Dimenco's new 56in panel has 4K resolution (3,840 x 2,160) and slices the image into 15 views. This gives viewers fairly sharp pictures – of 1/15 4K resolution – over the wider viewing angle of 120 degrees. But the price – 40,000 Euros – is still far too high for the average living room. It could, however, be used for shopping mall advertising or medical training.

'We expect consumer products in 3-5 years. The first applications will probably be for photo frames,' says Maarten Tobias, of Dimenco, 'because they are smaller and the consumer is less sensitive to quality' ●

In how many dimensions are you comfortable viewing the world? Let us know: email hcc@futurenet.com

Barry Fox

can be seen in up to five dimensions, but can only be fully appreciated via quinticlar glasses. Sadly, we sat on our £30k review sample



Tech diary

The world of AV and film can change fast. **Our calendar** means you don't miss out

Beauty & the Beast:
Disney's new Blu-ray
is out Nov 1



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				22  Red This high-octane action comedy opens in UK cinemas. Helen Mirren cuts loose alongside Bruce Willis and Morgan Freeman as retired CIA agents. www.red-themovie.com	23  Going for a song The face of portable media players was changed forever on this day in 2001, when Apple released the first ever iPod, with its mechanical scroll wheel and a whopping 5GB hard drive that put '1,000 songs in your pocket'	24  Say Cheese The White Sands V-2 No. 13 rocket made history on this day in 1946 as the first man-made object to take a photograph of the Earth from outer space. The photo was snapped at an altitude of 104km, the accepted boundary of space being 100km
25  24: Season 8 Relive Jack Bauer's final action-packed 24hr adventure from today when 24: Eighth Season comes to DVD and Blu-ray in the UK. www.fox.com				29  Saw 3D Today sees the UK cinema release of what promises to be the last ever Saw movie. This latest instalment promises to terrify audiences with eye-popping 3D effects! http://saw3dmovie.com		31  Happy Halloween! It's the favourite night of the year for horror fans, and as there's guaranteed to be ^{to be} something worthwhile on TV, HCC suggests that you mark the date by settling back with a copy of the fantastic <i>Trick 'r Treat</i> on DVD
1  Beauty & the Beast Released today in the UK, this set of Blu-rays promises a remastered hi-def encode and loads of bonus goodies. disney.go.com	2  Game show scandal On this day in 1959, contestant Charles Van Doren admitted to a Congressional committee that he cheated on the popular TV show <i>Twenty One</i> , as immortalised in the 1994 film <i>Quiz Show</i>			5  Let Me In We're hoping that this Hollywood remake of the incredible <i>Let the Right One In</i> will put the bite back into vampire movies. Kick-Ass's Chloe Moretz plays the young vampire, Abby, in the spooky thriller, which hits UK cinemas today		
8  Dr Who: The Complete Fifth Season Matt Smith's first year as the alien time traveller comes to DVD and Blu-ray in the UK today in this feature-packed boxset. www.bbc.co.uk/doctorswho/dw			11  Happy Birthday! Hollywood heartthrob turned award-winning actor Leonardo DiCaprio turns 36 today. Celebrate by catching his mesmerising lead performance in Martin Scorsese's thrilling <i>Shutter Island</i> on Blu-ray			
15  How to Train Your Dragon DreamWorks' animated smash hit appears in 2D on DVD and Blu-ray in the UK today. www.howtotrainyourdragon.com		17  Better dead than red On this day in 1947, following the investigation by the House Committee on Un-American Activities into Hollywood labour unions, the Screen Actors Guild voted to use an anti-Communist loyalty oath	18  HCC #189 Start saving your pennies. Your favourite home cinema magazine hits the stands this Thursday, packed to the gills with hardware tests, features, outspoken opinion and full-on software reviews. www.homecinemachoice.com			

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22 CONNECTED FUTURE

The connected future



Home cinema is changing fast – **Chris Jenkins** gets a taste of the connected technology of the future at the 2010 IFA Show

Every year IFA, the Internationale Funkausstellung or International Radio Exhibition, serves as a taster of the home entertainment technology of the coming year and beyond. This year, the message from the Berlin show was very clear; the future is in connected technology.

For home cinema enthusiasts, the advent of 'Smart' TVs, networkable media storage, internet-capable amplifiers and the like opens up intriguing possibilities. In the very near future, we will be able to download any content we choose from the internet, watch it by streaming live, or storing on media servers, distribute it to any room in the house and transfer it to portable devices or in-car. It will be equally easy to upload our own content for sharing via the Web.

The technology to do all this is already here; the challenge for manufacturers is to incorporate it into user-friendly systems. The question for home cinema enthusiasts is whether this is still home cinema. Audiophiles might object to the relatively low quality of MP3 files on an Apple iPod, but that hasn't stopped the concept of music downloading becoming a huge success. If video goes the same way, will we be sacrificing quality for convenience? Will the high-quality formats we know and love, such as Blu-ray and multichannel surround, be thrown out in favour of fast downloads and user convenience?

To try to find out, we wore out lots of shoe-leather visiting the 1,423 exhibitors at the enormous Berlin exhibition site, which features 23 halls, each the size of a football pitch. This year the show attracted a record-breaking 235,000 visitors.

Every year a number of themes emerge from the throng, and for this 50th anniversary exhibition the strongest three to stand out were 3D, Smart TV and tablet computing.

Every major TV manufacturer showed a 3D TV using active shutter or passive glasses, and several unveiled 'autostereoscopic' TVs, though none were aimed at the domestic market – they're still too expensive and have too limited a viewing angle to have any application in the home. Many projector manufacturers had a 3D model to show, including Sony, whose presentation including classical piano superstar L

a giant videowall.

>



Sony: Live 3D video and a DJ set by space-suited Genki Rockets (below) set the tone for a spectacular presentation



SONY's big announcement of the show was Qriocity, a network service platform which was originally announced in 2009 under the name Sony Online Services (SOLS). Qriocity will connect many of Sony's network-enabled devices, but will also deliver digital entertainment content and services including video, music, games and e-books. A premium streaming video service, Video On Demand powered by Qriocity, will be available this autumn in the UK and other major European countries. There will be a choice of hundreds of box office titles from 20th Century Fox, Lionsgate, MGM, NBC TV, Paramount, Sony Pictures, Walt Disney and Warner Bros, both in HD and SD. The system will feature on 2010 models of network-enabled BRAVIA TVs, BD players, and BD home cinema systems. The service has been available in the US since April.

By the year end we should also encounter Music Unlimited, a cloud-based digital music service, which will give access to millions of songs stored and synchronised through it. This will be available on Sony TVs,



People of Lava: Crazy name, lovely product

BD players and BD home cinema systems, as well as on the PS3 games console, VAIOS and other PCs, and portable media devices.

Possibly even more significant was the showing of a prototype of a Sony Google TV. Due for launch in the US at the end of the year, this model will enable you to search for video and TV content on the web using your TV remote control, and access online services such as YouTube, Picasa, Twitter and Wikipedia. Like a web browser, the Google TV will enable you to bookmark favourite websites, as well as accessing most popular and recommended sites. Applications could be loaded and the system updated with new features using Intel technology.

On the 3D front, the big news was the VPL-VW90ES projector. Demonstrated by the ever-genial Eric Kingdon, Sony's first 3D-capable model features Advanced Iris 3 technology, a dynamic contrast ratio of 150,000:1, an upgraded SXRD 240Hz panel and 2D-3D conversion. (More of this on page 46.) Sony also showed new receivers including the STR-DA5600ES and STR-DA3600ES. All of them are 3D-capable, network-connected and feature Digital Cinema Auto Calibration, 1080p video upscaling and the HATS system to tackle digital jitter.

PEOPLE OF LAVA, a little-known Swedish brand, pulled off quite a coup by showing what was claimed to be the world's first

Sony: A collaboration with Google marks what could be the real game-changer for future 'smart' TVs



TOP TEN COUNTDOWN

Our choice of the hottest, and the oddest, home entertainment products

HANNSPREE ADORABLE ANIMALS

Fed up of huge, flat, black TVs with boring old HD pictures, high-tech facilities and the latest processing technology? Why not go for one in the shape of a fluffy camel instead? Hannspree's range of 19in portables also includes a zebra, a crab, a polar bear and a giraffe...

www.hannspree.com

10



Android-powered TV. Android is an operating system for mobile devices, based on the Linux open-source software platform, and rivalling Apple's iOS in popularity as a means of writing software applications for smart mobile phones. As it's possible to add new Android apps to the Lava TV, it is in effect a huge wall-mounted computer, with full internet access being the least of its capabilities. Available in 42, 47 and 55in variants at prices ranging from €2,500 to €3,500, the People of Lava Scandinavia also features a unique approach to case design; it's made from a mineral-based material not unlike Corian, which is used for high-end kitchen worksurfaces. Designed to cool, reduce vibration and repel dust, the case certainly looks superb.

HANNSPREE, known in the UK mainly for budget, smaller-sized LCD TVs, launched a 55in 3D TV model featuring 4,000:1 contrast ratio and four HDMI v1.4 connections. Rather more novel were the company's 19in portable TVs, in the shape of furry bears, giraffes, crabs, zebras and camels...

Projector giant **EPSON** shocked us slightly by not launching a 3D projector. Instead, we got a range of four models from family-friendly entry-level to full-blown home cinema systems, but all resolutely 2D. The EH-R2000 (around £3,000) and flagship EH-R4000 (around £5,000) are both full HD models, boasting claimed contrast ratios of 500,000:1 and 1,000,000:1 courtesy of 3XLCD Reflective Panel technology. The new projectors also boast improved response times, reduced inter-pixel spacing and enhanced interpolative video processing.

Entry-level models include the EH-TW450 (around £550), and the EH-TW3500 (approx £1,200). At this price, most projectors are DLP models, so if you lean more towards LCD, these 3XLCD offerings are an attractive proposition.

YAMAHA's offering included flagship AV receivers, the RX-V3067, RX-V2067 and RX-V1067. Featuring a stable chassis with an H-shaped



Hannspeer: Everyone's onboard for the ride – this 55in 3D TV was one of dozens on show

cross-member frame and double-bottom design to reduce vibrations, the RX-V3067 has 7x140W RMS output, eight HDMI inputs, 1080p HD signal processing and scaling, Cinema DSP 3D and a new YPAO sound optimisation system. Bluetooth, iPod and networking are included.

MITSUBISHI, meanwhile, launched a line of projectors including the sub-£1,000 full HD HC3200 DLP entry-level model, designed to be used in rooms that are not completely darkened. Then came the HC4000, a DLP model featuring DarkChip technology and boasting a contrast ratio of 3,600:1 and an as-yet un-named 3D model that boasted 120,000:1 contrast ratio and 1,000 ANSI lumen output.

SONOS showed the latest iteration of its multi-room audio systems, with touchscreen Controllers and ZonePlayers connected to audio sources to stream music anywhere in the home. Perhaps more significantly, the free Sonos Controller app for the

JARRE TECHNOLOGIES AEROSYSTEM ONE

From a new company to the audio market, but the name behind it, French synthesizer knob-twiddler Jean Michel Jarre, should be familiar to all. The AeroSystem One is a columnar speaker system with an integrated 5.25in 60W woofer, and two 3in 30W satellite speakers. Essentially it's a big iPod dock, but its sound is rich and fills the room sufficiently to make you feel this is quality audio. It features USB and digital and analogue auxiliary audio inputs, a stylish remote control and comes in silver or black variants. The €799 price tag is not outrageous. Currently only available from the website.

www.jarre.com.



AIPTEK MOBILE CINEMA D25

It looks like a ghettoblaster, but it's actually a portable video projector with an integrated DVD player and stereo speakers. Capable of projecting an image of up to 75ins dia., it can be adjusted to fire horizontally or vertically, so if you don't have a suitable wall, you can always try the ceiling. Featuring a DVB-T tuner, USB port and slot for SD/MMC cards, it's CD and MP3-compatible and can be powered by mains or battery (although the projector won't work with battery power). It's available from Amazon.co.uk at around £275. Aiptek also showed a range of pocket projectors including the Z20, a 5Mp camera with HD camcorder and Pico projector. Recording 1,280 x 720 videos and projecting at 640 x 480, the €349 Z20 features a 2GB internal memory, slot for 32Gb MicroSD card slot, and Li-Polymer battery.

www.aiptek.com



iPad, youPad... everybody viewpads

Taking the tablets

The Apple iPad applied the Smartphone concept of inexpensive downloadable apps to the touch-screen tablet format. But there's nothing revolutionary about its technology, so dozens of rivals at the IFA show jumped on the bandwagon with similar products. For the home cinema enthusiast, this holds the possibility that a single device could act as a multimedia downloading engine; a portable playback device; a source for media playback on a full home cinema system; a games system; and a controller for entertainment and home automation systems. Look out for tablet computing devices such as the Samsung Galaxy, Toshiba Folio, ViewSonic Viewpad, Binatone Home Surf and many more...

iPhone and iPad showed the way these devices could become the default domestic controller of the future.

SHARP's offering centred on its Aquos TVs, with more than 30 models in the new lineup. The company claims that its Quattron technology, with the fourth yellow pixel, makes the Aquos TVs ideal for 3D, offering maximum brightness and sharpness. The 3D model LE925E also includes AQUOS NET+ for access to websites such as YouTube, eBay and Facebook. Sharp also had a 3D Blu-ray player to show; the BD-HP90S has an ultra-slim AQUOS design, can be operated vertically and features built-in wireless LAN functions, DLNA support, YouTube compatibility, and an 'On-Screen Control Panel' function.

PANASONIC played up its 3D offerings very heavily, but the main emphasis seemed to be on the company's 3D camcorder. The HDC-SDT750 is a full HD 1,920 x 1,080-pixel progressive recorder with 3MOS sensor, AVCHD compatibility and 14Mp still picture function, using SD cards for media storage and playback via Viera BD players or TVs. The camcorder operates as a normal 2D device until you clip on a special 3D lens. Also on show was the world's largest 3D plasma TV, the 152in 4K2K TH-15UX1, featuring a stonking 4,096 x 2,160 resolution.

HARMAN-KARDON's BDS range consists of five complete home cinema systems and two electronics-only systems for consumers who already have speakers. Combining the functions of an AV receiver and Blu-ray player, these systems have evolved from the HS systems and are designed to complement any flatscreen TV. The 2.1-channel BDS 2 and 5.1-channel BDS 5 are the two electronics-only systems in the range; the five integrated systems are all sold with

Sonos: iPad control software for multi-room entertainment **Sharp:** Ultra-slim BD accesses YouTube, too **Panasonic:** Got 3D TV? – you'll want a 3D camcorder to shoot your own version of *Avatar*

complementary speakers and include the BDS 300, BDS 400, BDS 600, BDS 700 and BDS 800, which have 2.1 or 3.1 soundbar and native 5.1 configuration options. Prices range from €849 to €1,499, and we're hoping to have news of UK prices and availability soon. HK also showed a range of snazzy iPod docks, the Go+Play series, which features an integral subwoofer and battery-powered portability.

SAMSUNG's offering revolved around its 'Smarter Life' concept, >

TOP TEN COUNTDOWN

LG LEX8

Along with its ultra-thin OLED sets, LG's IFA offering focused on the NANO technology of its LED range. The LEX8 series uses a thin film to disperse the locally-dimmed, direct LED backlighting, giving a brighter and more colourful image while remaining just 8.8mm deep. Other features include 400Hz TruMotion technology, NetCast IPTV and 'Magic Motion' remote control of an onscreen cursor. Expect a Christmas launch and a price tag of around €6,000.

www.lg.com/uk

7



SAMSUNG GALAXY TAB

One of dozens of tablet computers unveiled at IFA, Samsung's Galaxy Tab is likely to put up the strongest competition to Apple's iPad. For the home cinema enthusiast, there are two clear points of interest; one is that the 7in Android-based tablet computer with built-in phone capabilities will be a popular mobile entertainment platform; the other is that it will inevitably be pressed into use as a household automation controller, so your complete home entertainment and utility needs could soon be under the control of a little tablet like this.

www.samsung.co.uk



6

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28 CONNECTED FUTURE

which combines Smart TV, IT and digital imaging products.

There was a good deal of emphasis on 3D; the company plans seven new 3D TV models for the second half of 2010, including the 65in LED backlit C8000 and a 50in plasma model. There are six new 3D Blu-ray systems, including the C8900 Blu-ray player that incorporates a 500GB HDD. Also planned is a 3D projector, the SP-A8000, a development of the A-800 featuring 1,000-lumen output, 10,000:1 contrast ratio and active shutter glasses.

But the SmartTV concept, highlighted by the C9000 model, merited most attention. Stand demos showed Samsung's Internet@TV functions, emphasising how the Samsung Apps Store could be used to enhance the TV's functions. The brand is sponsoring a 'Smart TV Challenge' to encourage developers to produce 'apps' for Smart TVs. But the latter is just part of the connected concept, with Samsung's AllShare connected storage devices enabling media sharing via a home network, and MediaPlay functions enabling users to play media directly from USB drives on SmartTV.

The final element in Samsung's Smarter Life concept is the mobile device, specifically the Galaxy Pad tablet. Clearly designed as an iPad-basher, the Galaxy has a 7in display, uses the Android operating system, and can function as a voice and video phone, web browser, e-mailer and pocket computer. It supports 3G, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, and a wide range of video formats including DivX, XviD, MPEG4 and H.264.

Of course, the emphasis on connectivity between different types of product raises two questions for the home cinema enthusiast; one is whether the emphasis on speed and convenience will detract from quality, the other is whether another format war is looming, as incompatible standards force consumers to choose and stick to products from a single manufacturer.



Samsung: The 'Smarter Life' concept includes Internet@TV functions, AllShare storage and MediaPlay features

PIONEER focused on its 'Works with iPhone' certified receivers: VSX-820-K/S, VSX-920-K and VSX-1020-K/VSX-1025-K. The company also flaunted its iControlAV app, which turns compatible iPhone and iPod touch devices into fully functioning remote controls that operate the company's new 7.1 channel receivers.

Apart from the entry-level VSX-420-K/S, all the new models can be enhanced with wireless Bluetooth audio streaming, and support 3D via HDMI v1.4, decode HD Audio formats including Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio, and feature Dolby ProLogic IIz height channel processing. From the VSX-920-K onwards, the new models feature Pioneer's proprietary Front Wide Mode which enhances the versatility of a 7.1 speaker arrangement.

Other features include: Advanced Sound

Retriever, which enhances compressed audio files; Internet Radio (the VSX-920-K and VSX-1020-K/VSX-1025-K get >

Pioneer: The latest range of Blu-ray players includes advanced networking features



TOP TEN COUNTDOWN

HDI DUNE PRO

Until IFA, HDI Dune's range were just a tantalising rumour to us. A multiformat media device with integral Blu-ray player and a vast spec list, it would be easier to name what the HDI Dune Pro doesn't support than what it does. Features include BD Profile 2.0, DVD/CD playback; DVD upscaling to 1080p; HDMI v1.3 output; network support including net radio; Torrent and NAS functions; high-end audio outputs including balanced XLR stereo and analogue 7.1 multichannel RCA outputs; RS-232 control port and 12V trigger input; S/PDIF optical audio, stereo audio; component video and composite video outputs; format support for FLAC, APE, WAV/PCM, ISO, MKV and DTS; IR input for an external IR eye; Pure Audio function; four USB ports; internal 3.5in SATA HDD, SD card slot and connectivity for external hard drives and a basic Web browser. Listed price is €1,990. www.dune-hd.com

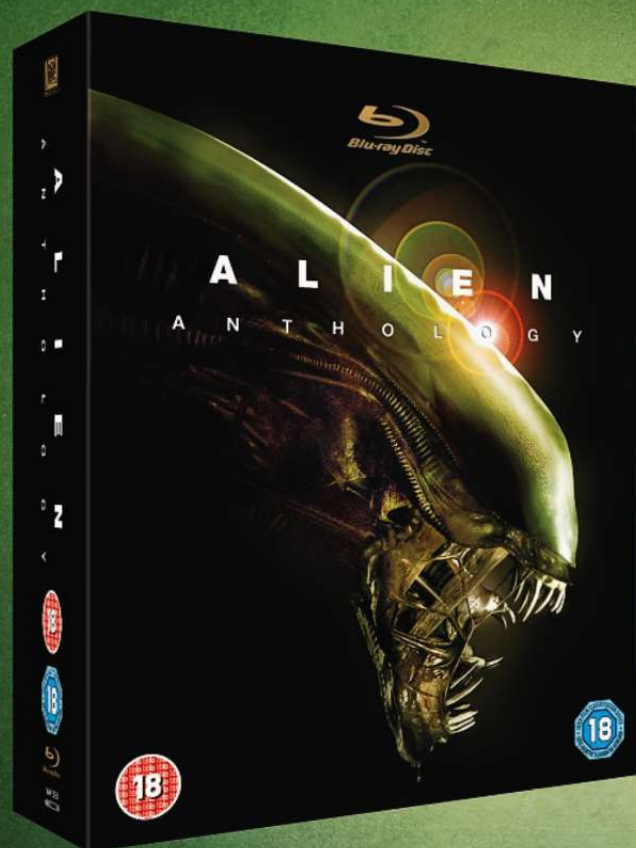


PEOPLE OF LAVA SCANDINAVIA

Somewhere in the depths of the Swedish countryside sits the People of Lava headquarters. Amazing things are coming out of this unassuming wooden building, though so far the only product to have made it to the UK is a motorised wall-mount... we're hoping this will change soon, as the Scandinavia TV looks set to cause something of a revolution. It combines stunning design – the case is a made of a vibration-dampening, dust-repelling, heat-dissipating mineral substance – with amazing Android-powered Smart TV technology which offers web browsing and app functions. www.peopleoflava.com



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Naked 3D

.. and a glimpse at the autostereoscopic future

Goodbye to glasses

TVs which give a 3D effect without the viewer wearing special glasses were certainly visible at IFA, but there was no suggestion that they would be aimed at the home market. No one has been able to crack the problems of cost, or limited viewing angle – so while Samsung showed its 3D LFD commercial glasses-free 3D screens at IFA, the only autostereoscopic products we are likely to see on sale in the near future are Sharp's 3D Smartphone and Nintendo's 3DS handheld game console

24 preset stations and have easy URL entry of personal favourites); Multi-Channel Acoustic Calibration from the VSX-520-K/S onwards, and the proprietary Pioneer Precision Quartz Lock System (PQLS).

At the high end are the flagship SC-LX83 and SC-LX73 that integrate Pioneer's Direct Energy HD amplification concept, designed to accurately reproduce the full dynamics of uncompressed, hi-res sound formats such as Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio. Meanwhile, the VSX-LX53 and VSX-2020 are built around Pioneer's Advanced Direct Energy amplifiers. All support 3D and Dolby Pro Logic IIz, and include an RF remote and control of the receivers' main functions using the tilt movement and touch screen capabilities of compatible iPhone or iPod touch devices.

Like all other manufacturers, Pioneer has 3D BD players on the way. The BDP-LX54 and BDP-430 will feature: HDMI v1.4a; network connection; BD-Live; optional wireless LAN adapter and YouTube access. They are compatible with the Pioneer control app for mobile devices, and support the Precision Quartz Lock System (PQLS) for jitterless transmission of uncompressed two-channel or multi-channel

LPCM, and now also bitstream audio over HDMI to compatible Pioneer AV receivers. The BDP-430 will be available from November, followed by the BDP-LX54 in December.

Also announced were three Blu-ray Disc Home Cinema Systems, BCS-303, BCS-FS505 and BDC-707, offering USB, iPod/iPhone, Bluetooth and DLNA functions, 1080p true 24fps playback with 12-bit HDMI Deep Color support, plus a wide range of surround sound formats including Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio Essential.

The two 5.1 channel and one 2.1 channel BD systems include a slim, 'free layout' subwoofer and a variety of speaker options. There's also a DSC home cinema system range with DVD playback.

As previously reported, **PHILIPS** majored on the LED-backlit, 3D version of the Cinema 21:9 TV, along with the 8000 and 9000 3D series. But the company also announced a 'design your own' TV, with screen size, mount type, remote control colour and frame colour all selectable by the customer. Unfortunately, there's no sign of this or the Econova TV being available in the UK, the latter being an environmentally-friendly design using 60 per cent recycled materials, solar-powered remote control and low-consumption power supply.

Philips also announced a consortium with Sharp and Loewe to build a common internet platform for connected TV, based on the technology used in its Net TV system. The aim is to 'enrich the number of applications we offer via connected TV, such as video-on-demand, catch-up TV, music, gaming, social media and infotainment.'

LOEWE showed developments in its Connect TV range, with 32 and 40in, LED edge-lit LCD screens, featuring 200Hz picture quality and MediaPortal networking connectivity, including MediaNet web access. The networking interface has been redesigned, perhaps not surprisingly, in view of the luke-warm response to its original version. Loewe also showed new LED backlit TVs in the Art range, and a wireless



Philips: The company is so keen on 3D that it even has a 3D shaver, the Sensotouch 3D. Don't ask us how it works...

TOP TEN COUNTDOWN

TOSHIBA 55LZ1

Derived from the advanced processing technology of the Japanese Cell TV model, the Toshiba 55LZ1 CEVO-Engine TV is expected in the UK early next year. Designed to realise both 'high picture quality and advanced functions', such as networking, recording and flexible software upgrading, the TV will feature Active Vision 400Hz processing, a range of picture presets and professional calibration functions, a 512-cluster LED backlit screen, and an Intelligent 3D function to adjust brightness and colour automatically. The set will also support Toshiba's online services for downloading premium content, and Hbb TV, a European standard for hybrid internet/TV services. Price is likely to be below €5,000. www.toshiba.co.uk





Loewe: The Connect TV range moves into LED-edge lit territory



Loewe: MediaPortal networking features have been redesigned for easier web access

Multiroom Display system, which makes it easy to carry on watching your programme when you move from one room to another. Inevitably, there was also a preview of a 3D TV, due for launch in the first quarter of 2011 and featuring built-in hard drive recording, a 400MHz panel and sound options up to 7.1.

As there's a High End audio show each May in Munich, IFA generally isn't much of a show for home cinema speaker technology. So, while it does have an Audio Hall, it's mainly devoted to stereo products. **CANTON**, though, put up a spectacular display under the banner 'Music is Eroticism for the Ears'. Forty new products for the 2010/11 season comprised three new ranges of loudspeakers, nine subwoofers and nine 5.1 packages, including total range replacements to the Karat, Chrono and GLE Series. Highlights included the Movie CD

Canton: 'Eroticism for the ears' is the seductive claim of these admittedly sexy speakers



Series, a lifestyle speaker range with aluminium cabinets that are acoustically reworked to cope with higher volume levels and re-tuned for improved

performance. The Movie CD 5.1 range is designed to integrate with the new range of subwoofers, with long-throw drivers for increased bass response, sandwich-constructed cones for greater rigidity and Canton's wave surround driver technology. The top two models (SUB 850R and SUB 1200R) feature 750W audiophile-grade digital amplification, remote control and the addition of a passive driver in the bottom of the cabinet to replace the port.

So, a packed IFA, if one which held few surprises. With 3D breaking into the projection market, the time may have arrived for home cinema enthusiasts to start taking it seriously – or not, in light of the continued shortage of 3D movies. Connected TV, however, is clearly the Next Big Thing. Whether it's relevant to the home cinema market, or will mark a worrying shift away from AV quality to convenience, only time will tell... ●

Let us know what you think – is Connected TV the future, or could it be the death of home cinema? E-mail your comments to hcc@futurenet.co.uk.



PANASONIC TH-152UX1

This 152in full HD 3D plasma display is the world's largest. The 4,096 x 2,160-pixel panel with new super-efficient quadruple luminous technology achieves a higher illuminating speed, so avoiding the cross-talk problems with conventional 3D panels. But don't get too excited; you can't afford one. Set your sights maybe on the new 42in model in the GT20 3D TV series, which features NeoPDP technology and high-performance 3D processing. www.panasonic.co.uk

SONY QRIOCITY/GOOGLE TV

With its online media platform Qriocity and the announcement of Google TV, Sony has set the pace for home entertainment for the next decade. Like the Apple iPod, connected TV will soon become part of everyone's lifestyle. TVs and PCs will function as one device, making it easy to find and watch the entertainment you want on one system. But will Connected TV with its fast downloads bring about a revolution of convenience over quality? Watch this space...

www.sony.co.uk



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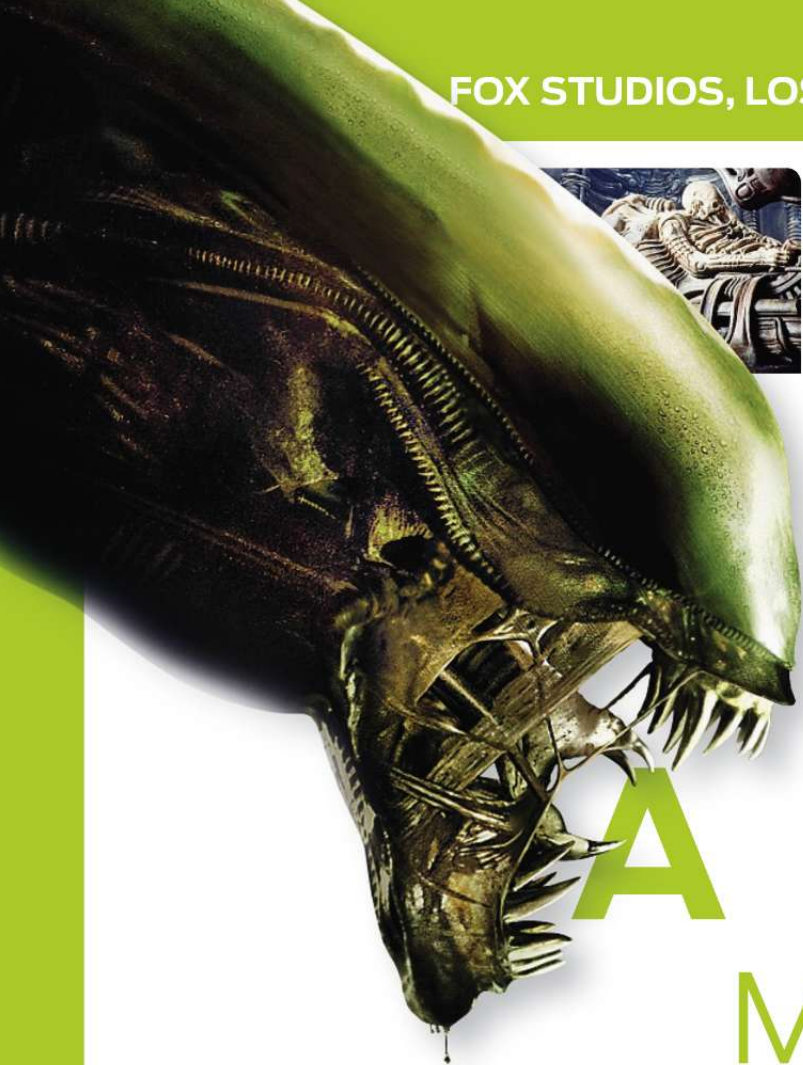


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Inside the ALIEN MIND

Steve May talks to Charles De Lauzirika, producer of the groundbreaking Alien Anthology Blu-ray set



Go-to-guy: Charles De Lauzirika is no stranger to big-budget restorations

Alien Anthology producer Charles De Lauzirika grins like a child who's found the keys to a (futuristic) toy chest. 'Even now I'm frankly just slack-jawed at just how over the top this set is... but it's over the top in all the right ways. The word I keep using is geekgasm. It's a geekgasm!'

Rocketing into contention as one of the most innovative and comprehensive Blu-ray releases of the year, this long-anticipated six-disc set

promises to be the last word in the *Alien* franchise – at least until Ridley Scott's 3D sequels come into home orbit.

We're talking on the Fox lot in LA (below left), just as Lauzirika and the team from authoring house Trailer Park are putting the final touches to the project. The man in front of me is no stranger to big budget restorations and special editions, having already masterminded the reworking of *Blade Runner*, *Legend* and the *Alien* movies.

'On the previous DVD Quadrilogy set we produced some 50 hours of bonus content, or something crazy like that. So when Fox came to me about doing a Blu-ray set, I scratched my head and thought what more is there to do? But believe it or not we blew the doors off the Quadrilogy. The Anthology is pretty much everything you have seen before plus a whole bunch of new stuff.'

An innovation in BD presentation

This is, of course, an understatement. Not only does the new Blu-ray collection contain some 60 hours of special features, including four of previously unreleased material, it also innovates with a complex search that allows you to trawl all four movies for trivia and info.

'There is some amazing material in there that I frankly thought would never see the light of day.'



Lauzirika confides. 'And supporting all that great content is a really amazing interactive experience, one that I didn't even think would be possible back when we did the *Quadrilogy* – but technically it's now a whole new world.'

Helping Lauzirika visualise the *Alien* Anthology set was production house Trailer Park, whose main bread and butter is creating teaser trailers, disc packing (they came up with the three-dimensional box for the Blu-ray of *Jennifer's Body*) and other fun stuff.

Lauzirika and Trailer Park came to *Alien Anthology* after working on the BD release of ('the unanimously beloved') *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*. 'That disc was a great interactive experience – regardless of what you thought of the movie,' smirks Lauzirika.

Egg before alien?

Trailer Park was responsible for all the menu graphics. 'What's really great is that all the graphics are geek proof. Everything is fully canon. So if anyone wants to go through the set frame by frame to figure out if they got everything right, well yeah, we did actually.'

Indeed, the menus even help flesh out the mythos. 'The *Alien 3* menu actually helps fill in a plot hole from the movie,' confirms Lauzirika. 'A lot of fans have asked: Where did the egg come from? How did the story even start? Well the menus attempt to tell you that story; they reveal where the egg came from. That's one of the things I love about this set. **The menus are actual content. You can watch this stuff, and even learn more about the films from the menus.** And that's before you even get to the special features...

One of the great things I love about this set is that all four movies have isolated scores. On *Alien* and *Aliens* you even get two versions of isolated scores: the composer's original version, what James Horner and Jerry Goldsmith originally wanted, and then the director's version of the score.'

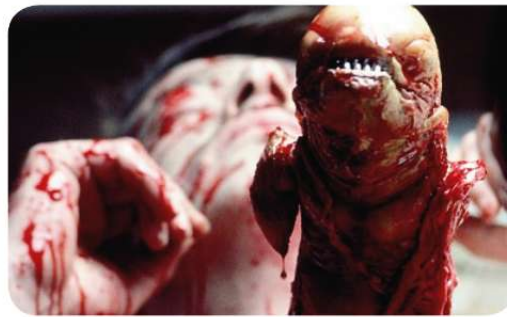
The biggest interactive goodie in the set is of MU-TH-UR Mode, a fully interactive companion.

'We wanted to push Blu-ray technology as far as we could and make everything instantly accessible,' says the producer. 'The MU-TH-UR Mode feature puts everything at your fingertips as you watch the movies. If you're interested in creature design, you can instantly go right to every mention in the documentaries.'

You'll be able to choose which audio streams to listen to, Data Tag topics as you watch them, and search an index that allows you to go to various topics alphabetically.'

Taking advantage of your player's onboard memory, everything you tag from whatever film, sits in the player's persistent memory. 'So when you get to discs five (which is basically the MU-TH-UR disc where all the *Quadrilogy* documentaries are housed), and six, MU-TH-UR will know what topics you are interested in and take you directly to them.'

On the DVD *Quadrilogy*, each film had a supplemental three-hour plus documentary. Now, those documentaries each get an additional hour



Fit to burst:

There are plenty of new special features are present on the *Alien Anthology* set, including alternate footage of the famous chestburster scene



Graphically speaking:

The menu screens have been meticulously crafted by authoring house Trailer Park

of out-take material. So what kind of material will fans find?

Get if off your chest

Lauzirika smiles: 'It's endless. There are the dailies of Jon Finch, who was originally cast as Kane, the character eventually played by John Hurt. Finch fell ill on the first day of filming, and you get to see those dailies from his only day on set. We really raided the archives to bring out every last scrap of cool stuff for this release. There are more deleted scenes than ever before, effects reels, multi-angle sequences.'

'There's an alternate angle scene of the infamous chestburster scene. You can go straight to chestburster in the search index, which shows the *Alien* cast and crew discussing the chestburster scene – the search index gets you to the material you're looking for right away.'

So what of the movies themselves? Charles De Lauzirika insists that the films have never looked or sounded better.

'We've done a whole new audio mix for the *Alien 3 Special Edition*, including bringing back some actors to get them to reloop some of their dialogue. A lot of stuff that was really muddy has been re-recorded. Lance Henriksen came back, Charles Dance came back. The result is a new version of the original *Special Edition*, which has much better sound and picture quality.'

But what of James Cameron's *Aliens*, a film dogged by poor image quality throughout its history? Some might say it's always looked bad on home video. 'Bad is subjective. *Aliens* was shot with a different aspect ratio, a different film stock, so it's very different than the other three films. Cameron shot it with faster film so it's grainier, and that has always been a problem. But it's a combat movie, it's a war film, and I think one of the things Jim was doing was going for that Vietnam gritty, war correspondent vibe with the camera. One thing you have to keep in mind is *Aliens*, of all four films, is the most different visually and you can't just force it into the look of the other three films' ●

(*Alien Anthology* is reviewed on page 100)

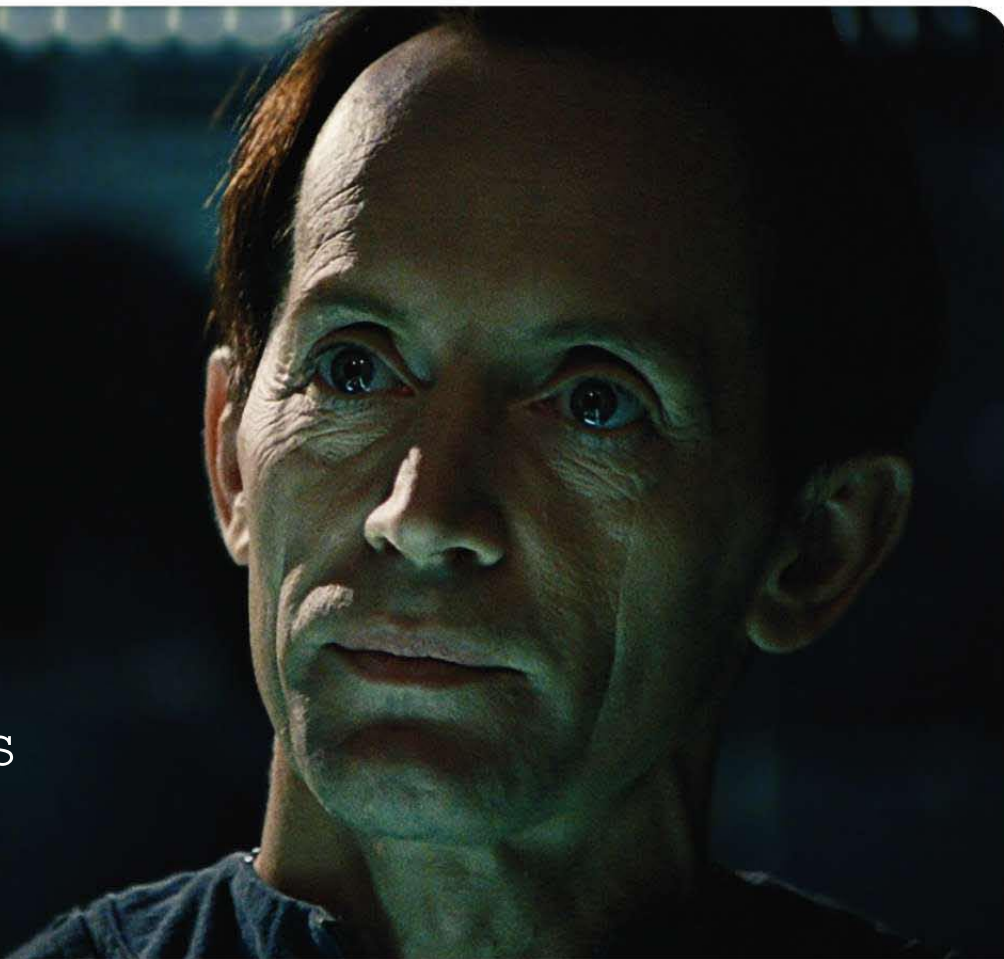
Siggy and moggy: Cat hairs are the least of her worries





Mark Craven

celebrates the career of one of Hollywood's serial support role actors



Wasn't he in?...

Man in Black:

Spooky TV series *Millennium* saw Henriksen star as agent Frank Black



Not every actor in Hollywood can be a movie star. While the industry has its Brad Pitts and Johnny Depps, it also needs its support cast: the guys who appear halfway down the credit list, playing those roles the big names deem too small, weird or fan-base-alienating to consider. The 'also-rans' who have no qualms about being killed on screen, or playing evil scientists, or appearing as a disembodied head.

Lance Henriksen falls into this category; a 70-year-old actor with over 100 credits to his name, Never close to being a leading star, but respected enough as an actor to be hired by Steven Spielberg, Ridley Scott, Sam Raimi, David Fincher and James Cameron. His face will be familiar to all movie fans, even if his name isn't.

Henriksen's biggest claim to fame is that he was Cameron's first choice to play the role of the Terminator in his 1984 sci-fi hit. Those who struggle to imagine the slight, craggy-faced actor rampaging his way through LA with bulging biceps, should remember that in the original concept the Terminator was something that could easily blend into the crowd. When Cameron decided to cast Schwarzenegger, he still gave Henriksen a role as the police detective Vukovich

The actor teamed up with Cameron again for *Aliens* in 1986, this time delivering a faultless performance as the android Bishop. This gives rise to another claim to fame – Henriksen has appeared in each of the *Alien*, *Terminator* and *Predator* franchises (he played Charles Bishop Weyland in *Alien vs Predator*).

Die, damn you!

It's his roles in franchises where Henriksen has acquired a cult following, particularly amongst horror fans. Over the last 30 years he's turned up in *Omen II*, three *Pumpkinhead* movies, *Mangler 2*, *Mimic 3*, *Scream 3* and, er, *Hellraiser 8*. 'I've been killed in so many movies in so many ways,' admits the direct-to-video stalwart.

While the above movies may be short on cinematic quality, it doesn't mean Henriksen hasn't had gems in his career, such as John Woo's *Hard Target*; Raimi's *The Quick and the Dead*; Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark*; and the aforementioned *Aliens* and *The Terminator*. Delve deeper into his filmography and you'll spot him in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *The Right Stuff*, *Jagged Edge*, *Dog Day Afternoon*... As a bastion of Hollywood for over 30 years, Henriksen is worth saluting ●

Quintessential Henriksen... On Cameron's set in *Aliens*:



1 Blade-toting Bishop

When Hudson (Bill Paxton) asks Bishop to do his knife trick, he gets more than he bargained for...



2 Hand it to him

According to Henriksen, the idea to use Paxton's hand in the scene was something he suggested.



3 Cut!

When re-shot the second time, Henriksen accidentally cut one of Bill Paxton's fingers. Oops!



4 Speed demon

This scene is also one of the first uses of the 'Magic Cam', which could vary its film speed in a single shot.

Must own...



The Terminator

MGM → R2 Definitive Edition DVD
£13 Approx

While Henriksen ultimately lost out on the title role to Arnold Schwarzenegger, James Cameron still found a place for him as Detective Hal Vukovich in this home cinema favourite.

20.54: 'I hate the weird ones.' Henriksen might not be in the film for long, but he does get to be the cop who puts the Connor murders together.
59.35: Vukovich goes down in a hail of bullets, making a last stand as the Terminator rampages through the police station.



Near Dark

Optimum Home Entertainment → R2 Special Edition DVD → £18 Approx
When Henriksen appeared in Kathryn Bigelow's superb vampire flick, he gave his best performance ever as vamp family patriarch Jesse Hooker.

40.25: In order to force new vampire Caleb to kill for himself, Jesse leads his family to a small town bar in one of the film's most memorable sequences.

84.35: With the sun beating down on him through the windscreen of the car he's driving, Jesse prepares to go out in a true blaze of glory in an attempt to kill Caleb and his family.



Aliens: Special Edition

20th Century Fox → All-region Alien Anthology BD → £50 Approx

James Cameron's explosive *Alien* sequel makes excellent use of the actor's cold and calculating demeanour to play with audience expectations.

98.41: Having pointed out that there's only four hours before the colony's reactor explodes, Bishop volunteers to crawl through a claustrophobic conduit to reach a remote antenna.

143.31: Having seemingly saved the day, Bishop then gets impaled on the Queen Alien's tail.



Pumpkinhead

MGM → R1 Collector's Edition DVD
£9 Approx

A rare chance for Henriksen to step up as lead character Ed Harley, this excellent backwoods horror, directed by Stan Winston, gave him plenty of scope as the father of a murdered child using supernatural means to take revenge.

34.26: As Ed visits the witch's hut for the first time, the anamorphic transfer struggles with the smoky interior – resulting in some obvious artefacting.

78.12: This time Lance gets to go into battle armed with a flamethrower. But it doesn't end well for Ed Harley...

Worth seeing...



Damien: Omen II

20th Century Fox → All-region Omen Trilogy BD → £57 Approx

This second *Omen* film finds Henriksen playing a key role in the franchise as the military school instructor who guides Damien towards his devilish destiny.

19.17: The quality of the restored AVC 2.35:1 1080p visuals shine through in this exterior scene where Henriksen is introduced to his platoon of recruits.

53.44: 'The day will come when everyone will know who you are, but that day is not yet': Lance sets Damien on the path to discover his hellish heritage and true purpose.



Hard Target

Universal Pictures → R2 DVD → £6 Approx

Henriksen's black-clad Emil Fouchon is the ideal foe to face off against Jean Claude Van Damme's Chance Boudreaux, in this enjoyably daft take on *The Most Dangerous Game*.

66.57: An arrow narrowly misses Fouchon's head, but ends up starting a moonshine and dynamite-fuelled series of explosions that will give your 5.1 system a workout.

88.31: With all of his henchmen dead, Fouchon has to go mano-a-mano with Boudreaux in the film's fiery conclusion.



The Quick and the Dead

Sony Pictures → All-region BD
£20 Approx

Sam Raimi dipped his toe into the Western genre with this fast-paced outing. Henriksen shows up as one of the duellists and steals a number of scenes as the vainglorious Ace Hanlon, with his special pack of cards with an ace for 'every time I kill a man'.

26.08: Ace shows off his sharp-shooting skills with the aid of a pack of cards, a young girl, a horse and this Blu-ray's crisply-delivered Dolby TrueHD 5.1 positional effects.



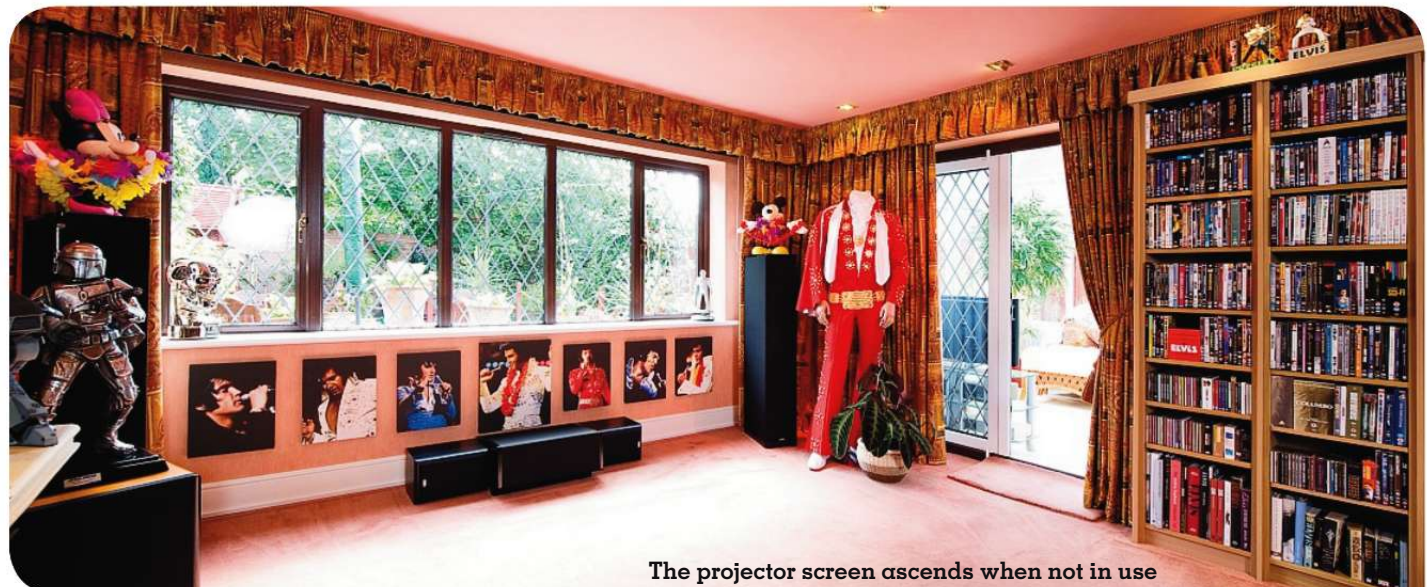
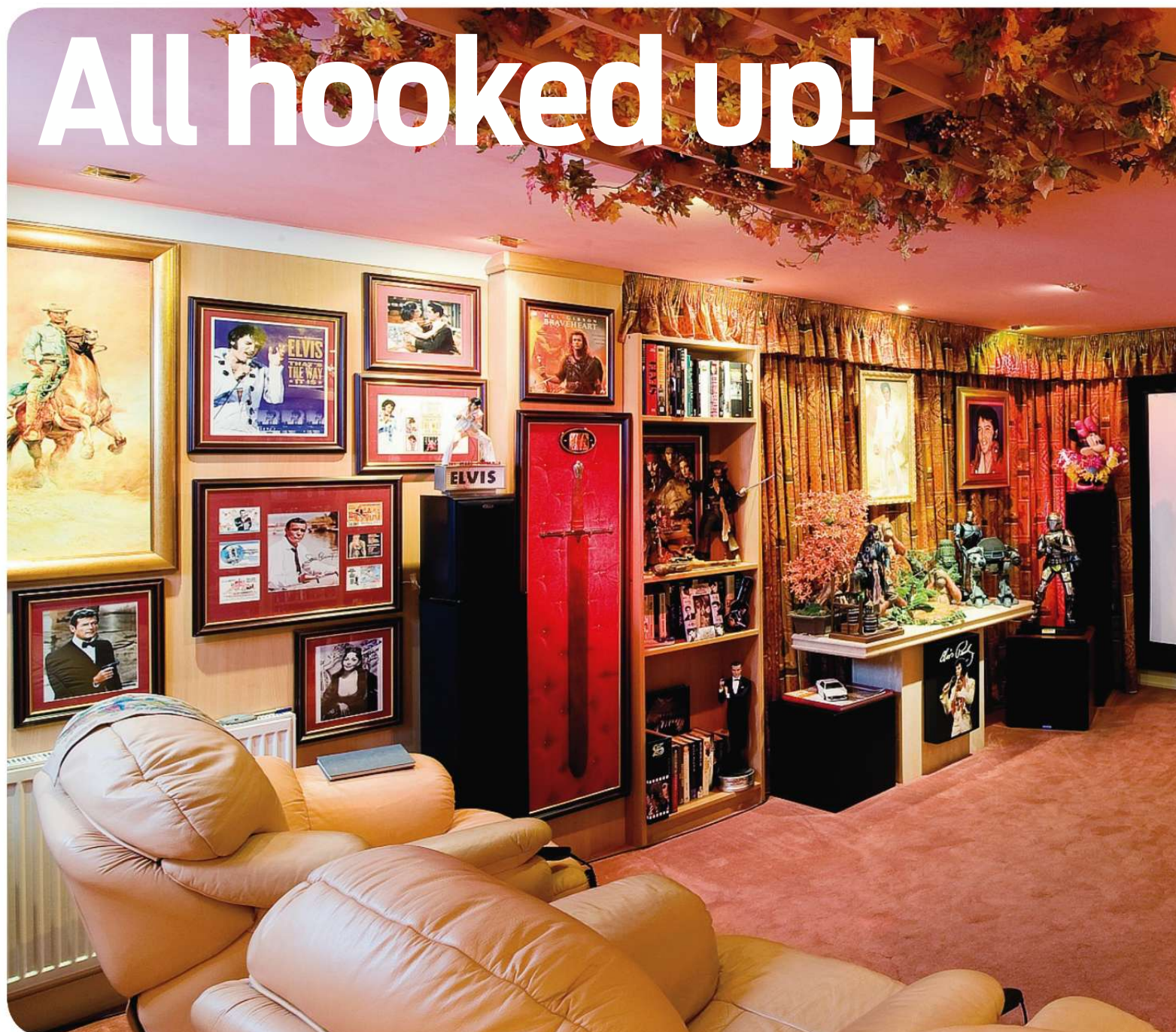
Scream 3

Dimension → R1 Collector's Series DVD → £10 Approx

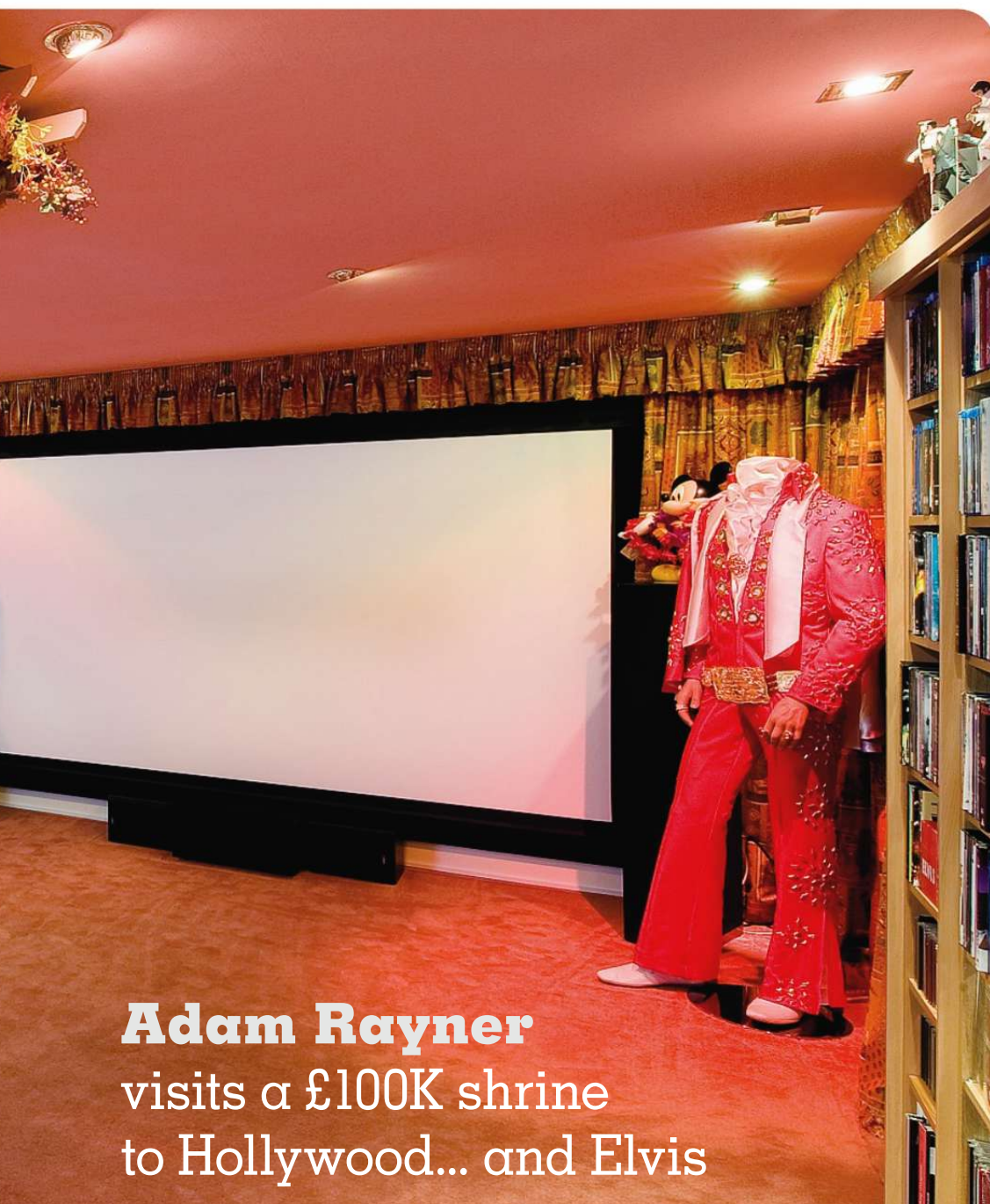
Even a memorable supporting turn from Henriksen (as John Milton, the producer of film-within-a-film, *Stab 3*) comes to nowt in this weary follow-on of Wes Craven's slasher series.

13.48: 'Violence in cinema is a big deal right now': Lance Henriksen shares some screen time with Roger Corman.

98.58: Having outlined his evil plan, the killer prepares to frame Sydney for the murders, resulting in Henriksen's film producer getting the cruelest cut of all.



The projector screen ascends when not in use



Adam Rayner visits a £100K shrine to Hollywood... and Elvis

These days it has become less cool to admit to being an Elvis fan, most of whom seem to be living in a past they never had. But *HCC* reader Barry is the 24ct real deal. A gent of Elvis's own generation, he has been a proper fan all his life, while forging a successful career as a consultant engineer. He also owned and performed in a Vegas Legends tribute show that played Blackpool with great success.

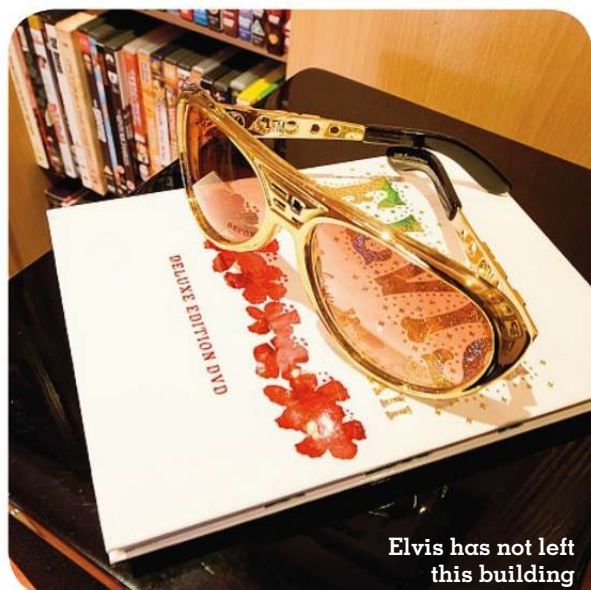
Barry clearly knows his movies and has a stripped-down, yet elegant, cinema setup. This is married to a true engineer's love of the objects themselves. The result is a room with a lot of carefully chosen speakers, very little in the electronics rack and a few experimental speakers that are kept around, but no longer hooked up. The room was purpose-built for cinema use and the trio of people-eating, ultra-comfy leather chairs are fully powered!

In every direction, the walls are lined with his enviable collection of quality prints, movie flyers and autographs. Then there are the sculptures and figures from all sorts of genres of movies. Desirable full-size Terminator busts, detailed Cap'n Jack figurines, Robocop, Predator and Gort models and a Pewter Boba Fett that weighs 65lbs!

But all these become mere souvenirs in the face of the Elvis suits from the Burning Love and Aloha shows. Made by B&K (Elvis' original outfitters) and correctly accessorised, they represent the thick end of £10,000 each.

The AV performance of this room is very high end indeed. The speakers, from Definitive Technology, are all dipoles, and have a set of equal and opposite transducers on their faces pointing at the walls, as well as direct radiating at the very exclusive audience. The incredible collection of full-size mannequins and even the sword from *Braveheart* serve as bass traps and sonic diffusion at the boundaries. The whole dipolar effect is enhanced by this fabulously diffuse room acoustic. Visuals, come courtesy of a premium-grade Denon Blu-ray player and Panasonic's PT-AE4000 projector.

I played my favourite 'toon, Pixar's *Lifted*, on BD, plus some DTS test disc clips, as well as some of Barry's favourite moments. The sound was tight, fast, very detailed and with excellent placement, and the HD imagery superb. I loved it, and I'm sure the King, a home cinema fan in his time, would have too.



Elvis has not left
this building

Kit Checklist

Cinema room:
Powered: 16:9 blackout/screen with manual 2.35:1 overlay also available
Panasonic: PT-AE4000E projector
Onkyo: TX-SR875 AVR
Denon: DVD-2500BT multi-disc player
Definitive Technology: 4 x BP-10 bipolar floorstanding loudspeaker; 2 x BP2000 floorstanding loudspeaker with integral 300W, 15in active subwoofer; CLR 2000 centre
Velodyne: DD15 active subwoofer
Lutron Grafik: Eye lighting control
Living room:
Samsung: PPM63M7FB 63in plasma screen
Tannoy: L & R speakers
Paradigm: Centre speaker
Denon: AVP A1 AVR

40 INSTALLS



A Early adopter

The kit rack at the back of the room houses a Denon DVD-2500BT disc-spinner and Onkyo's TX-SR875 receiver – the first ever AVR to pack Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio decoders

B Media mogul

Barry's shelves are stocked with his DVDs, Blu-rays and film memorabilia

C Aye, aye

Every cinema room needs a Captain Jack Sparrow figurine

D Well stacked

The ceiling-mounted Panasonic PT-AE4000 projector is an HCC Best Buy badge winner, and mixes mind-boggling set-up flexibility with some of the best LCD-delivered pictures around

E Viva home cinema!

While these authentic Elvis suits might not be everyone's cup of tea, they actually help with the room's acoustics

F Surrounded by sound

The room's seven Definitive Technology speakers use bipolar arrays to create a diffuse, wide soundstage. LFE grunt comes from one of Velodyne's DD15 subwoofers, although the DefTech BP2000s feature integrated 15in drivers. 'When Kong grows you can feel it in your bowels,' says Barry



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These photos feature just a small selection of Musical Images' installation work over the past 20 years.

Certified: AV-holic!

Every issue, an **HCC reader** invites you to take a tour of their beloved home cinema setup...



Sci-fi selector:
Patrick is torn between *Avatar* and *Star Trek* as his favourite Blu-rays

Introduce yourself...

I'm Patrick McGrath, 36 from Belfast, Northern Ireland.

And you're an AV-holic?

Totally. I have been buying AV since the days of stereo VCR and Pro-Logic. At 18 I had a THX and 40in rear-projection TV system in my 10 x 10' bedroom! Today, there is not a week goes by where I am not enjoying the AV system, tweaking it or spending some money on it.

What's in your setup?

My displays are a Samsung 37in LCD (for TV viewing only) and an Optoma HD65 HD projector firing at an 84in motorised screen. Sources include a Samsung BD-P1600 Blu-ray spinner; Nintendo Wii; Apple TV; Slingbox; SkyHD and a Popcorn Hour A110 media streamer.

Audio is handled by an Onkyo TX-SR607 AVR and a Jamo 5.1 array.

What will be your next equipment purchase?

I am planning an upgrade to the projector – the projector has

been fab, but an upgrade to a better picture and 1080p is very much overdue!

How much have you spent on your AV habit over the years?

I try not to dwell on it, but I guess £30K. Ouch.

What does your family think of your hobby?

When the PJ arrived, they did think it was a little overboard. But now, my wife and five-year-old daughter are very much on board – we all enjoy the kit immensely, from family movies and nights in to sporting events. My wife agrees that it has been one of the best investments we have made!

What's your current fave disc?

I am torn between *Avatar* and *Star Trek*. Both are getting more than 'regular' viewing and they are fantastic on the system.

Are you excited about 3D?

I've always classed myself as an early adopter – but not with 3D. I find it all a bit restrictive – glasses, viewing angle, kit compatibility... ●

Room essentials

A On reserve

This 37in Samsung LCD screen is for TV viewing only – Patrick watches films on his 84in projector screen

B Left, Right

Two Jamo E850 floorstanders take care of the front L/R channels in this 5.1 system

C Ready and waiting

Optoma's excellent HD65 projector is within arm's reach of the sofa

D File frenzy

Our AV-holic is keen on streaming media, so it's no surprise to see Popcorn Hour's A110 networked media tank lurking in his kit rack

E Lossless leader

Onkyo's TX-SR607 decodes the Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio soundtracks from Patrick's Samsung BD deck

Join the club

Do you want to see your home cinema system featured in the pages of *Home Cinema Choice*? www.homecinemachoice.com/avholic where you'll find all the information you need.

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*TrustedReviews.com, 09/2009: Overall: 9/10

Home Cinema Choice, 01/2010:

"Absolutely brain-splitting dynamics", Overall: 4/5

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REVIEWS

→ **Hardware highlights** SONY Home cinema 3D projector-**ONKYO** AV receiver/
speaker package **PANASONIC** 50in NeoPDP plasma **YAMAHA** Affordable 3D-ready AVR
XTZ 12in subwoofer from new Swedish audio brand -**TECHNISAT** Freeview HD STB
PSB Floorstanding 5.1 system **GROUPTEST** Five 32in LCD TVs put through their paces **AND MORE!**

Hidden talents

See p60 for our verdict on Sony's 40EX43B TV, which mixes
a Full HD LCD panel with a built-in PlayStation 3 game player



HCC Ratings key

Outstanding	1 2 3 4 5
Above average	1 2 3 4 5
Acceptable	1 2 3 4 5
Disappointing	1 2 3 4 5
Dire	1 2 3 4 5

The elevated standard of 3D

Team HCC

enjoyed an exclusive audition of Sony's ES-branded 3D projector – and didn't want to give it back

The past 12 months have seen one of the most aggressive format launches in the history of home entertainment. This time last year, before the CES show, Full HD 3D seemed a world away – the specifications awaiting ratification and the hardware still to be seen. Yet by the end of the Las Vegas tech fest in early January, AV fanatics had confirmation of a whole new level of home cinema coming their way, with major manufacturers launching 3D flatscreens and movie studios announcing software releases. By April, we'd reviewed the UK's first Full HD 3DTV (Samsung's UEC407000), and taken delivery of *Monsters vs Aliens* on 3D Blu-ray.

Where, though, asked a lot of home cinema enthusiasts, were the projectors? Everything was quiet on that front. People wowed by 3D in theatres, on a big screen in a dark environment, were now told the same thrills were achievable from a 40in LED TV. And, really, they aren't.

This is what makes Sony's VPL-VW90ES such an exciting product; the first consumer 3D projector, something that you can just swap into your existing cinema room for bigscreen dimensional fun, and at a reasonable price point. Although the exact tag is yet to be finalised, you can expect it to retail for around £5,500 (when we went to print, Sony was still pondering the issue). This wouldn't make it a mass



→ Specifications

3D Ready: YES Active Shutter with built-in IR emitter

Full HD: YES up to 1080p24

Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080

Component video: YES one input

HDMI: YES 2 x v1.4 HDMI inputs

PC input: YES one D-Sub

12V trigger: YES two

Brightness (claimed): N/A

Contrast ratio (claimed): 150,000:1

Dimensions: N/A

Weight: N/A

Features: SXRD 3 panel display; 2D-3D conversion; 2 x Active Shutter 3D glasses supplied; Cinema modes; gamma correction; electronically adjustable lens shift; anamorphic zoom mode; automated motorised lens cover; Advanced Iris3 control; 240Hz Panel Drive; fan noise 20dB

AV/CV

Product:
Active Shutter
SXR3D 3D
projector
HD projector

Position:
Sony's only
domestic 3D
projector

Peers:
JVC DLA-X7
(TBC)
Mitsubishi
Diamond 3D
(TBC)



market proposition, of course, but considering that JVC's 2D HD950 launched for even more money, and that Samsung's 55in 9000 series 3D LED is in the same ball park, it looks like a bit of a bargain.

Sony has been kind enough to give *HCC* an exclusive first test of the VW90ES in a pre-production iteration, and is keen to stress that the unit we've lived with for the last few weeks isn't identical to how the VW90ES will perform when it finally hits shelves in November; the remote control isn't the finished article, the optical block will be different and the software isn't fully functional. For that reason, we didn't run it through our Tech Labs. But we did spend a lot of time playing with it...

L The first thing to note is that the VW90ES uses active shutter technology to craft a Full HD 3D image using the frame sequential mode. While Real D recently announced it will let manufacturers licence its Full HD passive polarisation wizardry for home products (which will bring the advantages of cheaper, lightweight glasses) any components of that ilk are still a way off.

The IR emitter that syncs the glasses to the image is built into the unit, with two banks above and below the lens cover. The signal is then bounced off the projector screen. However, the VW90ES is supplied with an RJ adapter to connect Sony's external emitter, the TMR-BR100. This might be required if the projector is installed in a very large room, with off-centre seating. We didn't experience any problems in our test room.

The two sets of 3D spex boxed with the VW90ES are the same used for all Sony Bravia TVs, so additional pairs can be purchased simply. However, for use with the projector, Sony has added a linear polarising filter to the glasses to stop light scattered by the screen affecting your visuals. You'll be able to order these filters from Sony should you buy extra goggles.

The VW90ES is similar to Sony's impressive 2D-only VW85 (see *HCC* #174). A Full HD SXR3D unit, styled in gloss black with an imposing centralised lens, it looks nearly identical. Cosmetic changes are limited to the lens rim, which is now black rather than silver.

Connections include two HDMI inputs plus analogue fallbacks, two >



The VW90ES uses the same 3D spex as Sony's Bravia TVs, but with an additional lens filter



Side control:

All the inputs, and manual controls are housed on the side of the VW90ES

12V triggers for aiding automated systems, plus VGA PC hookup.

Sony has made some improvements over the VW85, of course, along side its 3D capability. The most significant one is a narrower element spacing on the SXRD panel, which has resulted in a contrast boost. Sony claims a dynamic ratio of 150,000:1, thanks to its Advanced Iris 3 technology.

While our backs were turned, our Tech Labs measured a real-world ratio of around 68,000:1, an excellent figure that we hope the VW90ES will continue to deliver when the finalised model goes on sale.

3D immersion

Anyone doubting that 3D and projection isn't a match made in heaven should get themselves a session with Sony's black beast. The inflated size of the images equates to an improved 3D experience in every way. With a flatscreen 3DTV the outcome is often that you'll find yourself straining to ignore everything around it; on a large screen (the VW90ES is capable of producing an image up to 150in), you're more inclined to sit back and let the images wash over you.

And wash over you they do. With the Sony up and running, the frenetic opening scenes of *Ice Age 3* packed real dimensional punch, both in the foreground and background; the effect was enveloping. The same was true with *Monster House*, *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* and any other 3D Blu-ray we chucked at it.

This involving experience is aided by a first-rate picture performance. Even with a basic calibration (our unit wasn't completely tweakable) the VW90ES delivered a natural filmic

image, with accurate colours that never proved tiring, as well as smooth, stable motion. Colour gradations were solid, blacks impressive, but not crushed and detailing was often jaw-dropping.

The icing on the 3D cake was the absence of crosstalk (the ghosting effect fast becoming the talking point in home cinema circles), and Sony attributes this to the VW90ES' 240Hz refresh rate.

Standard 2D performance was also very good, so you shouldn't have any problems while you wait for new 3D software to arrive.

Of course, the VW90 comes with a 2D-to-3D conversion feature. Some people will view this as a gimmick, but, as Sony's technical marketing manager Eric Kingdon points out, it had to be in the PJ because it's in the brand's Bravia TVs. 'It's just obvious,' he told HCC. 'We must do it, because people are going to expect it.'

Upconverted 3D on this unit proved equally software-dependent as on flatscreen TVs. The new *Back to the Future* Blu-ray (see next issue for our review of the trilogy) didn't exactly wow with added depth, but a 2D version of *Monster House* (which was animated for 3D release) was much more impressive, presumably because Sony's software found plenty of depth cues already in the picture to work with. Neither was as excellent as the real thing, however.

Time to pre-order

So, positioned at an appetising price point, with built-in emitter, killer styling and a 3D performance that really does the format justice, Sony's VW90ES could become a firm favourite with home cinema fans – we can't wait 'til it finally goes on sale ●



3D PJ battle heats up

Sony may be the first brand to give us a 3D projector to trial, but we expect more to come in the following months.

Fellow LCoS user JVC announced at the US CEDIA show three domestic 3D projector, the DLA-X9, DLA-X7, and DLA-X3, with price points of \$12,000, \$8,000 and \$4,500 respectively. These use external emitters, and only the X9 will be packaged with 3D glasses. We're still awaiting confirmation of UK release dates, if any.

Mitsubishi has also demo'd a LCoS 3D projector, named the Diamond 3D, although an exact release date and prices have yet to be announced. US brand Runco has also said it is licensing Real D's passive Full HD 3D tech for its forthcoming D-73 PJ, although its \$50,000 price tag may be too much for many home cinema enthusiasts.

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T205 System.

Colourful imagination

Adam Rayner discovers the biggest speaker company he's never heard of – and wonders why he hadn't...

Loudspeakers are funny things and the folks who design them a rare breed of cat. While the electronics designer is a technical bod and the cable designer an abstruse alchemist, your speaker-maker is a driven passionate soul who is making speakers not because he has 'identified a market' but because he has to – he can't not.

PSB is a classic example of that drive. It's part of the agglomeration of fine speaker designers that you find in Canada (think Paradigm, Mirage, Energy...). Oddly enough, you also get other populations that breed 'em. The Scandinavians and Italians are also known for this as nations. Anyway, PSB stands for Paul & Sue Barton, and I must confess I knew little of them until now.

It transpires that PSB offers speakers from the truly acclaimed and terribly high-end to the stuff to nail to a wall around a flat telly, with no fewer than six other ranges in between, and a selection of subwoofers. Not to mention a fully mature and wide range of in-ceiling speakers and a choice of models designed for a cabinet install.

What we have on test here is the Imagine series, down from the Synchrony and Platinum ranges but above the G-Design, Image and Alpha series. This series comprises a tower, a book shelfer, a centre and a dipole/bipole.

LI was sent a pair of the big floorstanders (£1,200 approx for a brace), a set of the smaller surrounds (£600), a centre channel (£500) and an SubSeries HD8 subwoofer.

AV/CV

Product:
Well-made curved-panel enclosure speaker series

Positioning:
Third in line to the throne, below the Synchrony and Platinum series

Peers:
Bowers & Wilkins CM7;
Dali Ikon 6 MkII;
ATC Concept 3

Imagine that:
The build quality of this array is on par with that of far more expensive brands





All except the sub were finished in Black Ash (when the Dark Cherry finish would have been so very much sexier). The woofer itself was also black, but with a more matt veneer, – PSB doesn't make dedicated subs for its separate ranges.

This HD8 is an over-engineered little cube of a woofer. **It looks all cute and ineffectual, but has a bonkers half kilowatt of special BASH amplification inside.**

(This is to do with a marriage of class AB and class D tech to get big efficiency and high sound quality), as well as a set of 8in teeth in the front in the shape of a far-wobbling and very high power-handling speaker driver.

It also sports two more tusks. These are a pair of passive radiators, diaphragms installed with no magnet, but with a nice wobbly, controlled-compliance suspension to hang it in.

While allowing the cabinet to boom out some really loud waves thanks to the huge moving surface area in such a wee box, the 'sealed' effect of the diaphragms also means that this small set of pressure cones can be energised at frequencies lower than you could ever tune the thing to, without applying an elephant's trunk port to it after installation, like a bass pipe.

The SubSeries HD woofers come in 8in and 10in sizes and in my room, there is no question, I would have been wanting the 10 (or two of 'em) for the greater scale. Yet, oddly enough for an 8in, it didn't lack in any depth.

It loved the throbbing cod-reggae bass lines of my Sting DTS 5.1 CD, and while I am trying to move on from James Cameron's *Avatar* BD as demo material (partly because I've almost cut a spiral into the disc with the laser in the Sony deck I use), I still find the opening frames awesome as a test sequence. As this film opens, Sensei-Cameron wants you to feel a whole lump of cinematic awe, right up there with *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. He had me at hello, from the very first frame.

L The depth of the background singing of the natives and then the space travel throb was impressive, actually waking up some resonances in my room. But the real impression was from PSB's Imagine series speakers themselves. They have a snap and >



**Cool customer:**

The tweeters in PSB's Imagine series are Ferrofluid-cooled and -damped

attack that belies their cost, with a real fat lump of quick dynamism in there, too.

What this is about is the wonder of Ferrofluid, a megabuck-per-gallon liquid iron goop, which when injected into the voice coil gap of a tweeter, damps its motion mechanically, so it will only move when pushed rather than 'flap'. It also offers an immensely quick cooling effect being 'ferric' it will hang in the gap and stay there and, being a metallic conductive liquid, will also conduct heat from the coil to the huge heatsink that is the magnet itself. Thus, the coil doesn't heat up with big peaks and instead of the electrical qualities of that coil changing as it gets superheated, it works much better. And if that's all too technical for you, just know that all the above jargon translates to a more emotionally involving detail experience.

It's in the strings in Sting's *Food For a Crow*, or better yet, the impactful crescendo as we see the spaceship off the planet Pandora, or the *thwap!* as the shuttle enters the thick atmosphere of the moon. And it can't all be the posh tweeters, even if they are all the exact same Titanium dome all round. It has to be that 5.25in midrange driver, too.

Used just once in the surround/ 'book shelf' model, but with two each in the towers and centre enclosures, these are made of mineral-loaded Polypropylene with pukka rubber surrounds, rather than some foam, and are well-damped and long of travel.

Curved cabinets

The enclosures are as sexy and well put together as any I have seen.

The grilles attach snugly, and should you choose to forgo them, there's still a natty PSB logo mounted in front of the tweeter. I still wished I'd auditioned a set finished in Dark Cherry, though, as my room has a wood finish and would have offset more of the form of the speakers' shapes. These are described as compound-curved, which is all about avoiding the standing waves caused by having opposite-facing and parallel box internal surfaces.

In their rears, the Imagine speakers all have ports. One each for the bookshelf and centre and two on the towers. The latter arrive with a single plug and you can play with blocking one or other port.

As one is long and the other very short, you have options, using neither or either port hole blocked, and are encouraged to experiment.

The blocker plugs are substantial rubber things, but you only get one and the other is an option, which seems a parsimonious thing to do if the makers mean you to play and see, and I think they do.

PSB's website and manuals reveal a deeply committed outfit with a passion for music and good. It just comes across in how they write about their speakers. The manuals, in particular, are fantastically detailed and considered, advising the PSB buyer on everything from speaker placement to the dangers of driving low-powered amplifiers to their limits.

These Imagine speakers are an array that's very easy to fit and setup. And while it's three grand's worth of kit, I reckon they hit way above their weight and can be compared to other brands' systems around the £5,000 mark. They have a lovely sound of real quality and power and all they lacked was the bigger scale that serious money can buy. But of course, PSB has two more ranges upstream for that.

If you're in the market for a new surround system, I'd definitely advise heading to your dealer for a demo of these classy Canadian cabinets ●

→ Specifications

PSB Imagine T towers

Drive Units: 2 x 5.25in Polypropylene bass drivers; 1 x 1in Titanium dome with Ferrofluid cooling and damping
Enclosure: Two-way dual rear ported, with one port bung provided
Freq Response: 38Hz-23kHz +/-3dB
Sensitivity: 90dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 20-200W
Dimensions: 210(w) x 945(h) x 346(d)mm
Weight: 18.5Kg

PSB Imagine B bookshelf

Drive Units: 1 x 5.25in Polypropylene bass driver; 1 x 1in Titanium dome with Ferrofluid cooling and damping
Enclosure: Two-way, rear ported
Freq Response: 52Hz-23kHz +/-3dB
Sensitivity: 89dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 20-150W
Dimensions: 191(w) x 330(h) x 305(d)mm
Weight: 7.8Kg

PSB Imagine C centre

Drive Units: 2 x 5.25in Polypropylene bass drivers; 1 x 1in Titanium dome with Ferrofluid cooling and damping
Enclosure: Two-way, rear ported
Freq Response: 47Hz-23kHz, +/-3dB
Sensitivity: 89dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 20-150W
Dimensions: 521(w) x 191(h) x 346(d)mm
Weight: 12.2Kg

PSB Sub-Series HD8 subwoofer

Drive Unit: 1 x 8in Poly-coated fibre cone woofer; 2 x 8in passive diaphragms
Enclosure: Sealed with passive radiators
Freq Response: 35Hz-150Hz +/-3dB
On board power: 500W RMS BASH
Dimensions: 279(w) x 294(h) x 287(d)mm
Weight: 11.4Kg/25LB
Connections: Phono input and output in stereo; mono phono LFE input and throughput; stereo speaker level input



HCC VERDICT

PSB Imagine Series 5.1
£3,000 Approx

Highs: Disproportionate bass from tiny sub; fast, impactful highs; great sweetness and dynamism

Lows: You only get one port bung per dual-port tower; sub finish doesn't match

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



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YAMAHA RX-V667 Development Project DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS CHECKLIST

- HDMI 1.4 with 3D and Audio Return Channel
- 6 in 1 Out HDMI inc front input
- 7 channel surround sound (90W x 7)
- HD Audio decoding with Cinema DSP 3D processing
- New Graphic User Interface with Album Art
- Scene Function for easy operation
- Discrete Amp configuration
- Assignable Amplifiers
- Front Presence Speaker option
- Virtual Presence Speaker Function
- High Quality Video Processing
- Analogue and HDMI upscaling to full HD 1080p
- Motion adaptive and edge adaptive deinterlacing
- iPod/iPhone "Airwired" Wireless Dock Option
- Compressed Music Enhancer with Cinema DSP
- Versatile Zone Control
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- Low Jitter PLL circuitry
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- Suggested Retail Price £450

APPROVED



Also available in black



October 2010



av·hi-fi

Powered by music

Space-saver savvy

It's not quite a home cinema in a box, but **Martin Pipe** finds much to recommend Onkyo's alternative to fully pre-packaged systems

Onkyo has built up an excellent reputation for its AV receivers. And here we have something intended to leverage this accumulated experience: a budget yet full-blown AVR, packaged with a matching 5.1 sub-sat speaker set.

Generous connections include a choice of three HDMI v1.4 inputs, in addition to provision for analogue composite and component sources. There's no conversion from analogue video to HDMI, so you may have to route appropriate cabling to your display. Nor are there front-panel or

5.1 analogue inputs. You are, however, blessed with an analogue audio-only input, plus three digital audio inputs, two of which are optical.

Most 'all-in-one' systems today make provision for the ubiquitous iPod. This one doesn't, instead offering a universal port of the type you'll find on Onkyo's 'standard' AV receivers. Into this, you can plug in an optional iPod dock or DAB tuner.

As an AVR, the speaker connections are fairly standard, compared to what you'll find on the rear of an all-in-one system. Binding post terminals are provided for the

fronts, while the surround speakers are connected via spring clips.

Another set of such terminals accommodate a second set of front speakers, possibly in a second room for basic Zone 2 functions. The only downside is that the main unit (the HT-R380) is designed for use with a passive subwoofer – in other words, the amp is built into the receiver, rather than the sub itself. This need not be a problem; some subs can be driven at speaker-level, although the fact the HT-R380 is already delivering a LFE signal could be problematic (another possible

Grille room:

Beneath the fixed grilles of each speaker lurk single magnetically-shielded 80mm drive units

AV/CV

Position:
AVR/speaker package

Position:
The budget end of a range that goes all of the way to THX

Peers:
Yamaha NS-P280 (speakers) and RX-V367 (AVR), Denon DHT-1311XP



solution would be to drive an active sub's line input via a resistive attenuator). Thankfully, crossover frequency can be adjusted from 40Hz to 200Hz in the menus.

The satellite speakers all employ a single magnetically-shielded 3.15in drive unit, as opposed to the separate crossover-linked tweeter and woofer of more upmarket sub-sat packages. The bundled bass-reflex subwoofer, meanwhile, contains a 6.3in driver mounted in a down-firing position. All connecting cables are supplied.

Just like the average AVR, the HT-R380 caters for a wide variety of audio codecs and surround formats. There's also a selection of 11 DSP variants, including modes optimised for gaming.

The HDMI ports support CEC device control and, with this engaged, I could adjust the receiver's volume with our Samsung TV's remote; however, Onkyo's remote would not operate my Samsung Blu-ray player or TV. Changing AV input on the TV would also change input on the receiver – a source of annoyance if, for example, the TV is switched to its

PC input when you're listening to a CD through the Onkyo rig. An HDMI passthrough function automatically routes the last-used source to the TV when the receiver is left in standby.

In performance terms, Onkyo's HTS-3305 system punches way beyond its weight.

It does far more justice to Blu-ray (and even DVD) than the average all-in-one system, with balanced and involving sonics that don't run out of steam in an average-sized room, especially in the all-important LFE department. Considering the single drive units of the satellites, a surprising degree of treble detail is conveyed, too.

Versus a full-blown separates system, though, there are limitations. When driven hard, presentation nudges towards the aggressive, and while the centre channel performs very well overall – dialogue is always intelligible – some bassier vocals suffer from a minor 'plummy' colouration. That's a minor gripe, though, and this system still comes highly recommended for those on a tight budget ●

→ Specifications

Dolby Digital TrueHD: yes plus DPLII
DTS-HD Master Audio: yes plus THX; no
Not at this price!

Multichannel audio: 6 x 100W

Multichannel input: no

Multi-room: no But you could run a second pair of front speakers in another room

AV inputs: ; 4x composite video; 1x analogue audio; 2x optical digital; 2x coaxial digital; Onkyo universal port

HDMI: 3-in, 1 out, v1.4 (supports 3D, ARC and CEC)

Component: yes 2 inputs

Video upscaling: no Conversion of analogue to HDMI not possible, either

Dimensions (AVR): 435(w)x152(h)x329(d)mm

Weight (AVR): 8Kg

Also featuring: 5.1 speaker array; AV sync adjustment; selectable crossover frequency; bass-treble tone controls; 'music optimiser'; headphone jack; FM-AM tuner with 40 presets and RDS capabilities; 4 DSP modes (11 variations); support for DSD and multichannel PCM via HDMI; Burr-Brown PCM1690 24-bit/192kHz DACs; 32bit DSP

→ Tech Labs

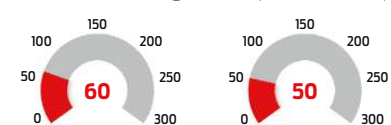
Power consumption: Watts



Idling: Clearly, quite a lot's going on even without signals to amplify

Powered: A peak consumption of 1kW, but over the course of a movie it will average at less

Power ratings: Watts (8Ω, 0.5% THD)



2-channel 8Ω: This power measurement is very reasonable considering the Onkyo's price tag

5-channel 8Ω: The same can be said of its multichannel output



HCC VERDICT

Onkyo HTS-3305
£300 Approx

Highs: A 'real' home-cinema audio system for a 'toy' price; a compelling overall performance

Lows: Some lower-bass colouration; passive sub complicates upgrades

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Boxing clever

Out of the box, TechniSat's HDFV Freeview HD box isn't a PVR. Plug in a USB storage device and that changes, discovers **Martin Pipe**

Although Freeview HD+ PVRs are starting to appear on dealers' shelves, some might want to dip their toe into these terrestrial high-definition waters with a basic receiver. This elegant and nicely-built HDFV is one such product. However, by plugging a USB memory stick or HDD into its USB port you can record and play back programmes – standard and high-definition alike.

The HDFV only includes one tuner so you can't record one programme while viewing another. Unless, of course, your TV has the necessary digital tuner. Some of you may ask whether USB recordings can be transferred to a PC, perhaps for conversion into DivX HD or DVD/Blu-ray authoring. They can indeed, thanks to standard FAT32

drive-formatting, but there's a sting in the tail. You can identify the files that take the form of transport streams from their .ts extension. But even if you have compatible playback software such as TSPlayer or VLC, you'll have no joy here.

Not even a professional transport stream analyser could make sense of these files.

TechniSat told us this is because **the HDFV encrypts all USB recordings – whether radio or TV – on the fly.** Worse still, they can only be played on that specific unit. But you can't blame them. While an easily accessible source of off-air HD material would, of course, be a Godsend for a pirate (or file sharer), it would, naturally, be a nightmare for the Freeview folks and broadcasters.

AV/CV

Product:
Freeview HD receiver with USB recording and multimedia recording

Positioning:
TechniSat's first Freeview HD product

Peers:
Humax HD-Fox T2; Philips DTR5520HD

Thanks to an Ethernet port, you can plumb the HDFV into your home network. Although a wireless dongle presents you with a Wi-Fi alternative, this optional device connects to the receiver via USB. And as there's only one USB port on the HDFV, you can't record while you're connected wirelessly. I tried a USB hub, but it was completely incompatible.

So why bother with networking? First of all, it should let you view iPlayer content. Well, theoretically at least, because you certainly can't with the present firmware. But what you can do now is access any content that resides in your networked PC's shared folders. uPnP servers are also visible, and this is a real AV boon, because a networked media player has effectively been thrown in for free. But there's a caveat. Only



MPEG2 files (including transport-streams recorded by other PVRs and PC tuners) are compatible. DivX and mkv/x.264 files won't play, although JPEGs and MP3s will. These can also be fed into the HDFV via USB.

But back to the HDFV's primary purpose. You don't get HD+ PVR features like Series Link, but an onboard timer can be scheduled from the EPG or manually.

Timeshifting to USB is another option, and the HDFV lets you save the buffer if you want to keep the programme.

Recordings can be edited, bookmarked or even archived to a networked PC (but they won't actually play on it).

Practically, the HDFV doesn't disappoint. The text-driven user interface looks a little old-fashioned, but it's friendly and very responsive. I like touches such as the EPG bargraphs that indicate how long programmes have left; other Freeview staples, such as digital teletext, EPG searches/genre-listing, support for multiple soundtracks and subtitles are all present.

Installation was problem-free, too, as all initial steps are wizard-driven. Everything else, including AV/network configuration and retuning is taken care of by a sensible set of menus. It was among these that I discovered the 1080p mode of the HDFV's HDMI port. Nothing is being broadcast in

this format, but HD content is being de-interlaced here. Standard-def content, meanwhile, is de-interlaced and then upscaled.

Performance

In performance terms, the HDFV acquits itself rather well. For starters, it seems to be very sensitive. Despite erecting an expensive aerial a few years ago (ironically, to bring in the terrestrial HDTV test transmissions), the signal-strength of the Crystal Palace Freeview HD channels (channel 31) was very low in my South-Eastern location. (You can check specific multiplexes in the Diagnostics menu). Yet the HDFV managed to hold onto these channels with a vice-like grip.

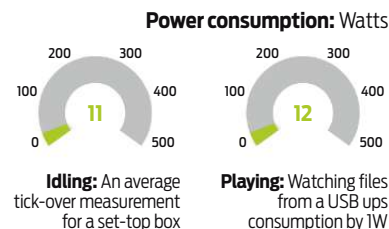
HD channels impressed me, with lifelike colour and impeccable detailing clearly displayed on a Full HD Samsung TV. Of course, standard-definition didn't fare as well, but it was on a par with HDMI-interfaced Freeview gear, with a surprising freedom from upscaling artifacts. You might want to toggle between the various hi-def modes (720p and 1080i are also supported) and settle on one that best matches your display. Sound quality, through digital and analogue outputs, was fine.

Overall, TechniSat's HDFV is a decent Freeview HD receiver with some neat multimedia talents, and is easily recommended ●

USB decision:

Memory sticks or external hard drives have to compete with a Wi-Fi dongle for the same port

→ Tech Labs



→ Specifications

HDD/PVR: NO/YES add your own USB memory device or HDD

Tuner: YES one DVB-T/T2

Upscaling: YES

HDMI: YES

Component: NO

Digital audio: YES coaxial or via HDMI

Dimensions: 280(w) x 155(d)

x 37(h)mm

Weight: 1.5kg

Also featuring: Freeview HD support;

PVR and timeshift via USB; RGB Scart analogue standard-def output; 124-event timer; sleep timer; active-aerial power option; networked and USB multimedia playback; optional wi-fi adaptor; parental controls; AV sync delay adjustment; HDMI CEC; editing/bookmarking of recordings; favourite channels lists; JPEG slideshows; card reader for Pay TV upgrades (hardware present but not yet supported by firmware); three-year warranty



HCC VERDICT

TechniSat HDFV
£150 Approx

Highs: Performance; responsive user interface; PVR upgrade path

Lows: Recording limitations; multimedia playback natively-supports few formats; no iPlayer support yet; only one USB port

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



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Enter the can-do TV multi-tasker

It bundles Blu-ray, networked AV and off-air HDTV into a pleasantly presented package. But is this enough to impress **Martin Pipe**?



We've certainly seen some interesting combos in the past: VCRs with onboard surround hard disk recorders, TVs with built-in DVD players, and iPod-ready melons. Okay, we might have made the last one up.

Taking us back to into the solid realms of reality, though, is Sony's KDL-40EX43B, which updates the DVD/TV concept by combining a smart-looking 40in LCD TV with a Blu-ray player.

This CCFL-backlit full HD TV also boasts a Freeview HD tuner and networked multimedia (Bravia Internet Video and DLNA playback), and so it's no slouch where other features are concerned. The vertically-mounted disc player, which is, of course, also compatible with DVDs and CDs, lurks behind the screen and is slot-loading. As a result, it doesn't spoil the minimalist lines of the set's cabinetry. Indeed, you don't even know it's there unless you're looking for it.

Other goodies on offer include Sony's Bravia Engine 3 picture processor, a PC VGA/D-Sub input and various energy-saving features (such as an ambient light-sensor and a radio mode that temporarily shuts down the screen). There's an analogue tuner, but chances are that it will never be used.

The Blu-ray player gives you most of the functionality associated with a well-designed budget unit – such as BD-Live compatibility

AV/CV

Product:
40in Full HD LCD TV with integrated Blu-ray player

Positioning:
Near the bottom of Sony's extensive TV range

Peers:
None – no other TV currently available here builds in Blu-ray

and the reasonably fast loading of discs. Apart from BD-Live, there are no fancy network features – these do, after all, fall within the TV section's own remit. Note that the Bravia Widgets platform (a separate entity to Bravia Internet Video, which currently includes Facebook, eBay, Flickr and Twitter) isn't present on this particular set.

Also designed into the KDL-40EX43B is a USB port for attaching memory devices – whether for multimedia playback, or providing a BD-Live temporary storage alternative to the set's own memory. There's only one port, though, which makes life rather difficult if you opt for the wi-fi dangle.

Analogue connections include component and a pair of Scarts.

Missing in action

Most of Sony's recent LCDs boast four 1080p24 HDMI v1.4 inputs. Not so the KDL-40EX43B, which only gives you three, two of which are side-mounted. I suspect that the Blu-ray player accounts for the missing one.

The Blu-ray player element of the TV is superbly integrated into the Xross Media Bar

user interfacer. From here, you can – in addition to discs – select internet-delivered TV content and DLNA media servers with much the same ease as digital (and, come to think of it, analogue) TV channels. The Xross

Media Bar is also needed for any setup beyond the wizard-driven 'first-run' stage.

I did have some problems getting the KDL-40EX43B to talk to my network via Ethernet. Although DLNA content was accessible, Bravia TV channels weren't. If, as I did, you get nothing more exciting than a '2200' error, reset your router and repeat the TV's network setup procedure. All should then be well.

In addition to such delights as Demand Five, FIFA highlights, DailyMotion, Eurosport and YouTube, the BBC's iPlayer is listed among the Bravia TV channels. However, I could not force the software update necessary to view programmes (you're at Sony's mercy here, because this task is carried out automatically and, assumably, over-the-air as opposed to via the more sensible network route).

I did come across some other niggles, some of which are more serious than others. The number of formats supported by the DLNA media player are restricted to JPEG, MPEG2 and MP3/WAV, although DivX/XviD clips can be fed in via USB. Then there's the infuriating, but well intentioned 'i-Manual', which to be brutally frank is no substitute for a pukka paper print. Resume Playback should also be offered; temporarily switch from, say, a Blu-ray to TV and there's no choice but to start playback again from the very beginning. Annoying, to put it mildly. ➤

→ Specifications

3D: NO Full HD: YES with 1080p/24 support

Tuner: YES Freeview HD, with CI slot for pay-TV upgrades

HDMI: YES 3 v1.4 compliant HDMI inputs

Component video: YES 1 input

PC input: YES 1 D-Sub Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080

Sound: 2 x 10W Brightness (claimed): N/A

Contrast ratio (claimed): N/A

Dimensions: 992(w) x 589(h) x 116(d)mm

Weight (off stand): 15.1kg

Also featuring: Integrated Blu-ray player with BD-Live and BonusView support, DLNA networked media player, Bravia Internet TV, CCFL backlight, 2 Scarts, USB port for JPEG/MP3/DivX multimedia playback/alternative BD-Live memory; 2 RGB Scart inputs; HDMI ARC/CEC support; headphone socket; sleep-timer; ambient light sensor; screen-off mode for radio/music; speaker-off mode; 5.1 audio output (via ARC/optical); multi-standard; virtual surround; picture/sound presets; adjustable colour temperature; PhotoTV HD; Wi-Fi ready



Sony's first BD-integrated TV offers a cableless solution for HD playback



The TV that's got it all: adds excellent picture quality to its roster of talents

The most significant limitation of all, though, will be discovered if you want to partner the KDL-40EX43B with an off-board home cinema system. It can only deliver 5.1 Dolby Digital or DTS soundtracks via the HDMI using the Audio Return Channel, (which resulted in too many dropouts with an Onkyo HTS-3305 to be of any value), or an optical digital output that's, thankfully, far more reliable. No provision has been made for hi-res or multichannel PCM, presumably because of connectivity bandwidth limitations.

Picture quality is, on the whole, remarkably good and especially if you've done a basic calibration, perhaps with *Video Essentials* or the THX Optimiser built into some DVDs. The colour tone is vivid without being overblown, and a commendable lifelike character is imparted to all decent quality sources. Likewise, the dynamic range is good enough to convey delicate shadow details without bleaching highlights. The KDL-40EX43B doesn't have the fancier MotionFlow video processing of Sony's more expensive models, but that's no bad thing. Movement, with 24p Blu-ray is filmic rather than artificially smooth.

The black level isn't, however, the best-in-class; this is where LED backlighting could have made a positive difference.

Blu-rays and hi-def TV from the Freeview HD tuner reveal the pristine resolving power of the full HD screen;

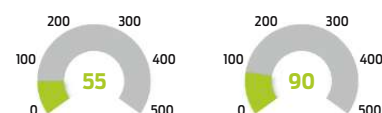
upscaled DVDs also look superb with a surprising freedom from unwanted artifacting. Film grain is shown as just that – as opposed to the 'mush' of lesser TVs. Standard-def Freeview channels don't fare as well, 'feathering' effects frequently being noticed around outlines.

In contrast, sound quality from the downward-firing speakers mounted in the bottom of the cabinet is disappointing. Lacking depth and any presence at the frequency extremes, it doesn't do justice to TV programmes, let alone Blu-ray's sonic potential. Although you can compensate for the lack of treble sparkle with an upwards tweak of the relevant tone control, the bass is beyond help – those tiny transducers can only go so far. Indeed, if the bass control is set too high, then you can expect all manner of unpleasant cabinet rattle and thrum. Virtual surround is an option, but this makes little worthwhile difference.

Quality-minded users are therefore advised to pump disc and TV sound via an external audio system. Although the only possibilities here are regular DD/DTS bitstreams or two-channel 16-bit/48kHz PCM, the results are nevertheless preferable to the TV's own audio system. And with the budget AV systems likely to be partnered with this set, chances are that you would be unlikely to tell apart a regular Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack from a TrueHD one.

→ Tech Labs

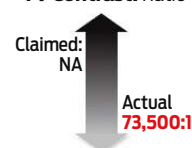
Power consumption: Watts



White screen: In standard mode in a bright room, this 40in consumes 55W

Test footage: A large jump with movie footage and the speakers maxed

TV Contrast: Ratio



Picture: An excellent contrast measurement, although luminance is quite low at dim 21.5f. Turning off the ambient sensor increases both luminance and contrast further

Colour accuracy



Presets: A choice of four but the best ('Warm 2') is some way off 6500K. However, adjustments available in the Advanced Settings menu will let you achieve it
Cool: 9,200K
Neutral: 7,500K
Warm 1: 6,700K
Warm 2: 5,700K

HCC VERDICT

Sony KDL-40EX43B
£900 Approx

Highs: Picture quality; BD integration will appeal to some
Lows: Lacklustre sound quality; only DD/DTS 5.1 output; some usability issues

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



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"the great things about the O!Play - it's ability to play HD Content without stalling, HDMI interface, sleek aesthetics and easy to use software interface."

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SCAN

SOUND INVESTMENT

AFTER GREAT SOUND FOR MOVIES, GAMES AND MUSIC?
ONKYO TAKES THE EXPENSE AND FAFF OUT OF IT ALL...

If you're a cinema lover with a great TV but no dedicated sound system, you're only seeing half the picture. Audio is a huge part of the cinematic experience...

You're just not going to get great sound from the speakers built into your telly. Yes, your new LED set looks tasty, but a thin telly means thin sound.

Too many people have got it into their heads that having a proper home cinema sound system is going to break the bank and require professional installation. Onkyo begs to differ. Its latest system combines the HT-S3305 5.1 receiver and speakers with the BD-SP308 Blu-ray player for just 500 quid.

Available at Richer Sounds, where helpful assistants and relaxed listening rooms take the pain out of purchasing, Onkyo's system is a one-box solution that's a doddle to set up. Each speaker is labelled so you know where to place it and the speaker cables are colour coded.

Just plug your Blu-ray player, satellite or cable box, console and any audio source into the Onkyo receiver. One cable then plugs it all into your TV. It's that simple, and with three HDMI's, digital audio and ethernet for BD Live on the Blu-ray deck, there's no shortage of connectivity options – just add some good quality cables from a top manufacturer such as The Chord Company. Use Onkyo's UP-A1 and you can play videos stored on your iPod or iPhone too.

Dolby True HD and DTS HD Master Audio are supported, getting the best from your Blu-rays and DVDs. Onkyo's system also makes a beautiful noise when fed music or next-gen games. Sound is rich and punchy, far better than what you'd expect for the price.

Great sound isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. Your TV's speakers aren't up to the job... but Onkyo's system is.

£500, WWW.ONKYO.CO.UK

Pop into one of Richer Sounds 51 stores nationwide. Visit www.richersounds.com for full store details...

Spec

POWER 5x 100W + 130W sub
CONNECTIONS 3x HDMI 1.4, 2x optical, coaxial, 4x AV, audio in, headphones, ethernet
AUDIO FORMATS Dolby True HD; DTS HD Master Audio; Dolby Digital Plus; DTS-HD High Res

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Super-adaptable Onkyo HTX-22HDX gets the best out of game soundtracks and can be expanded to a full 5.1 system



A great bedroom or games room 2.1 system, Onkyo's HTX-22HDX can be set up in minutes. Better sound on games means a more immersive experience. You'll feel every blast in shooters, every lunging tackle in footie sims and every note in music games. With many games offering soundtracks to rival Hollywood, it'd be a crime to stick to just your TV's speakers.

£300, WWW.ONKYO.CO.UK

Pop into one of Richer Sounds 51 stores nationwide. Visit www.richersounds.com for full store details...

Spec

CHANNELS 2.1 (can be made 5.1 with SKS22X upgrade package, £100)
POWER 2x 25W + 50W sub
CONNECTIONS 3x HDMI 1.4, 2x optical, coaxial, 2x phono audio in

The details

1 BD-SP308

The Blu-ray deck is also great for upscaling DVDs and has ethernet for BD Live

2 HT-S3305

The 5.1 receiver is the heart of the system and incredible value. It's easy to set up and pumps out cinema-quality sound to the bundled speakers

3 ONKYO SPEAKERS

With 100W centre and surround speakers and a 130W sub, these discreet units pack a hi-fi punch



ULTIMATE SONIC SETUP

Onkyo + Sonos =
multi-room musical nirvana



Live the multi-room dream with Sonos' hugely desirable Zone Players and Onkyo's superb sound systems. Stream CD-quality sound throughout your place, from Spotify or your own collection, controlling it all with the wonderfully tactile, touchscreen Sonos Controller 200 or your iPhone via a free app. You also get access to thousands of online radio stations. It's the ultimate audio lifestyle choice.

Start with the Sonos Bundle 250, partnered with your Onkyo HT-S3305 to get sound in two rooms, then add Zone Players and Onkyo hi-fis to more rooms as required. Turn audio on and off in rooms remotely as you wish, blast the same tune throughout your house with all rooms perfectly in sync, or have something different in each room: the choice is yours.

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Yamaha's new AVR is an all-round performer



Setting the scene

Yamaha's latest lower mid-range AV receiver is sensibly-featured and delivers the goods from movies, says **Martin Pipe**, but lacks grunt

The 7.1-capable RX-V567 from Yamaha – a company that has played a pivotal role in popularising home cinema – is not the most affordable model in its line-up, but at £400 still looks like a bit of a bargain. The problem is, almost every other AV brand is aggressively targeting this end of the market, so does it do enough to stand out?

Need input!

It certainly gets off to a good start, with connections on the V567 including four HDMI 1.4 inputs and seven analogue AVs – including one on the front panel. Each is 'fixed' and

has its own remote selection button, although you can marry the audio associated with one of these inputs to an HDMI (which also support 3D, the audio return channel, and CEC device-control). This is useful if, for example, your set-top box cannot deliver 5.1 via HDMI but has a digital audio output. It can also be tied in with Yamaha's 'scene' function, which is an array of four customisable buttons. Pressing one of these selects a specific source and soundfield.

The latter is a Yamaha speciality. Its 32-bit DSP chip is combined with 24-bit/192kHz Burr-Brown DACs. You can choose from 17 soundfields,

all of which are modelled on 'real-world' venues.

The V567 covers all of the essential surround sound formats and codecs, although Dolby Pro-Logic IIz and its 'height' channels are conspicuous by their absence (something which Sony has specced on its similarly-priced STR-DH810).

Hi-fi enthusiasts will appreciate the V567's compatibility with stereo/multi-channel PCM and DTS 96/24 soundtracks. If you're using a universal player with an HDMI output, then DVD-A and even SACD/DSD content can be enjoyed.

Another worthwhile feature is that analogue video sources (up to 1080i



→ Specifications

Dolby Digital TrueHD: YES plus DD/Plus and DPLIIx

DTS-HD Master Audio: YES and regular DTS and 96/24

THX: NO

Multichannel audio: YES 7 x 90W

Multichannel input: NO

Multiroom: NO

AV inputs: 6 x composite video; 6 x phono audio, 2 x optical digital and 2 x coaxial digital

HDMI input/output: YES 4-in, 1-out (v1.4)

Component: YES 2-in, 1-out

Video upscaling: NO but analogue (up to 1080i from component) converted to HDMI

Dimensions: 435(w) x 151(h) x 364(d)mm

Weight: 8.5kg

Features: 'Scene' buttons; AM/FM tuner with RDS support and 40 presets; onscreen menus; input rename; sleep timer; AV-sync adjustment (up to 240ms); front-panel fluorescent display; YPAO auto-calibration; selectable crossover frequency (40 - 200Hz); bass-treble tone controls; uncompressed music enhancer; multichannel graphic equaliser; headphone jack; 17 DSP modes; Virtual Cinema DSP; support for DSD and multichannel PCM; Burr-Brown 24-bit/192kHz DACs; 32-bit Yamaha DSP

→ Tech Labs

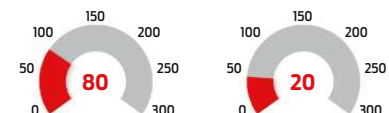
Power consumption: Watts



Idling: The RX-567 will get through 40W just ticking over

Powered: A high consumption relative to the AVR's power output – not very efficient

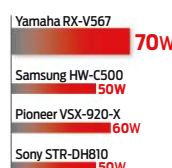
Power ratings: Watts (8Ω, 0.5% THD)



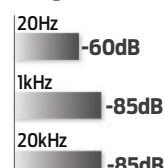
2-channel 8Ω: The RX-567 is a solid stereo performer, delivering 80W per channel

5-channel 8Ω: Step up to multichannel, though, and it struggles to approach Yamaha's 7 x 90W claim. It is possible to achieve 90W, but only with one channel driven

Untainted: Watts



Signal/noise: dB



Fidelity firewall:

Fidelity firewall is a measurement of power achieved before distortion becomes unacceptable. This two-channel performance is measured with an 8Ω load at 0.03%THD

S/N tests: Relatively low noise levels from this unit, and commendable for its price point

for component) are converted to HDMI, so only one cable is needed. Conversion quality is excellent for a low-priced unit – 480/576p, 720p and 1080i/p conversion can be selected, but upscaling of HDMI isn't permitted – it's switching only.

The V567 may lack USB or networked audio, but a dedicated rear-panel socket readies the V567 for an optional iPod dock or Bluetooth receiver that can wirelessly stream music stored on devices like multimedia-savvy mobiles. Already built-in is switchable enhancement for compressed audio sources. Yamaha claims this signal processing will restore depth and dynamics.

The V567 is easy to set up; the well-organised menus cater for speaker configuration, input-trimming (to eliminate volume 'jumps' after switching), lip-sync adjustment and Pro-Logic IIx decoding tweaks amongst others. The V567 also features YPAO auto-calibration. We recommend carrying out speaker and level setup before using it, otherwise some odd errors can result. There's also a user-controlled graphic equaliser allowing you to boost or

AV/CV

Product: Affordable AVR with 3D support

Position: Towards the bottom of Yamaha's 2010 lineup

Peers: Onkyo TX-SR608; Denon AVR-1911; Pioneer VSX-820

cut each channel over seven different bands.

The V567 turns in a very creditable performance, certainly from movies. On a DVD of *Avatar*, the wildlife sounds of the night-time Pandora jungle are conveyed with awesome detail. The closing battle also fares well. **Steering is superb, as revealed by the missiles zinging between speakers.**

Switching to the hi-res soundtracks of Blu-ray, specifically *Cloudy With A Chance of Meatballs*, demonstrates that the V567 can cope equally well with even subtler details. With music, matters aren't so clear-cut. In some of the DSP modes, bass passed to the subwoofer sounds unpleasantly monotonous. There's also an overall muddying of the soundstage that can be tamed, but not entirely eliminated, by engaging the 'direct' mode.

Our Tech Labs also rate the V567 poorly in terms of raw power, with a measurement of 20W-per-channel into 8Ω with five channels driven. That's still enough for a small-scale setup – exactly the target market for a low-range AVR of this ilk – but should be taken into account when you're drawing up your audition list ●



HCC VERDICT

Yamaha RX-V567
£400 Approx

Highs: An immersive surround sound experience; full HDMI functionality
Lows: Competing models are better-featured (eg DPL IIx, Zone 2); power measurements below spec

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

The great media escape

Break multimedia free of your PC with this bijou NAS, says **Martin Pipe**

Many of us now store photos, music and video on our PCs to stream to our TVs over a network. But doing so does have its flaws. Using a PC as a media server means coping with operating noise, power consumption and susceptibility to malware. A far better proposition is to copy content to a NAS with inbuilt media server, such as this inexpensive Verbatim MediaShare. The PC can then be turned off, until it's needed again.

Highs

- The MediaShare is unobtrusive and quiet – thanks to its fanless design. An automatic sleep mode will spin down the internal 1TB HDD when it's not being used, increasing lifespan and reducing power consumption. It's fast and responsive in use, too.
- The embedded DLNA-compliant media server is the proven TwonkyMedia, which will reliably serve up a variety of content.

I successfully tried a number of different networked players, ranging from an archaic Pinnacle ShowCenter to recent TVs from Sony and Samsung.

• An 'Easy Transfer' button allows files to be quickly transferred to the MediaShare's HDD via USB. There's also an eSATA port for auto mirroring with an external HDD, or adding capacity. Backups of key documents from computers on your network can be automated. As a precaution, you can also backup the MediaShare's own drive.

L

- No Wi-Fi, meaning that an unsightly Ethernet cable needs to be run from your router.
- A fair number of the cleverer features – such as mobile phone access – are optional. After a 30-day trial, you have to pay for them.



Aiming to serve: Use a NAS to give your PC a rest

HCC VERDICT

Verbatim MediaShare
£130 Approx

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

NERO MULTIMEDIA SUITE 10 → £70 Approx → www.nero.com

Nero plays while video burns

Martin Pipe explores a comprehensive software suite

Many PC owners will be familiar with Nero's 'Burning ROM' – this disc-writing software is, after all, bundled with many drives and PCs. The Nero Multimedia Suite 10 now takes matters on a step further by enabling users to create and organise content as well as commit it to disc. When the software is installed, you'll find a collection of applications that cover

a wide range of tasks including video/photo editing, soundtrack mixing, DVD authoring, video (re) compression, disc-burning and even the backup or recovery of important computer data. Some of these programs link to others, as and when they're needed.

Highs

- The timeline-based video-editing functionality ('Vision Xtra') contains everything you need to piece together a slick-looking movie, whether SD or HD. It is surprisingly well-designed and easy to use. Movies can be written to DVD/Blu-ray, exported as files or uploaded to YouTube. Audio editing is also allowed, invaluable if you're transferring music from redundant formats to CD or MP3.
- With the 'Soundtrax' app, you can edit and mix audio for discrete 5.1/7.1 surround! Although intended for movies, your efforts can be exported

to a 448kbps Dolby Digital (.ac3) file. You can derive a lot of sonic ping-pong amusement here, and the results can be heard on your home cinema system.

• Dual-layer discs and dual-layer BD-Rs were recorded and finalised without errors.

L

- If you want everything, including the templates and multimedia samples, the suite can occupy almost 5GB of HDD capacity.
- The lack of integration with digital TV tuners is a missed trick. It'd be great to watch programmes, edit out the ads and burn what's left onto DVD.

HCC VERDICT

Nero Multimedia Suite 10
£70 Approx

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



HOME CINEMA CHOICE DECEMBER 2010

In Brief

Halo Reach

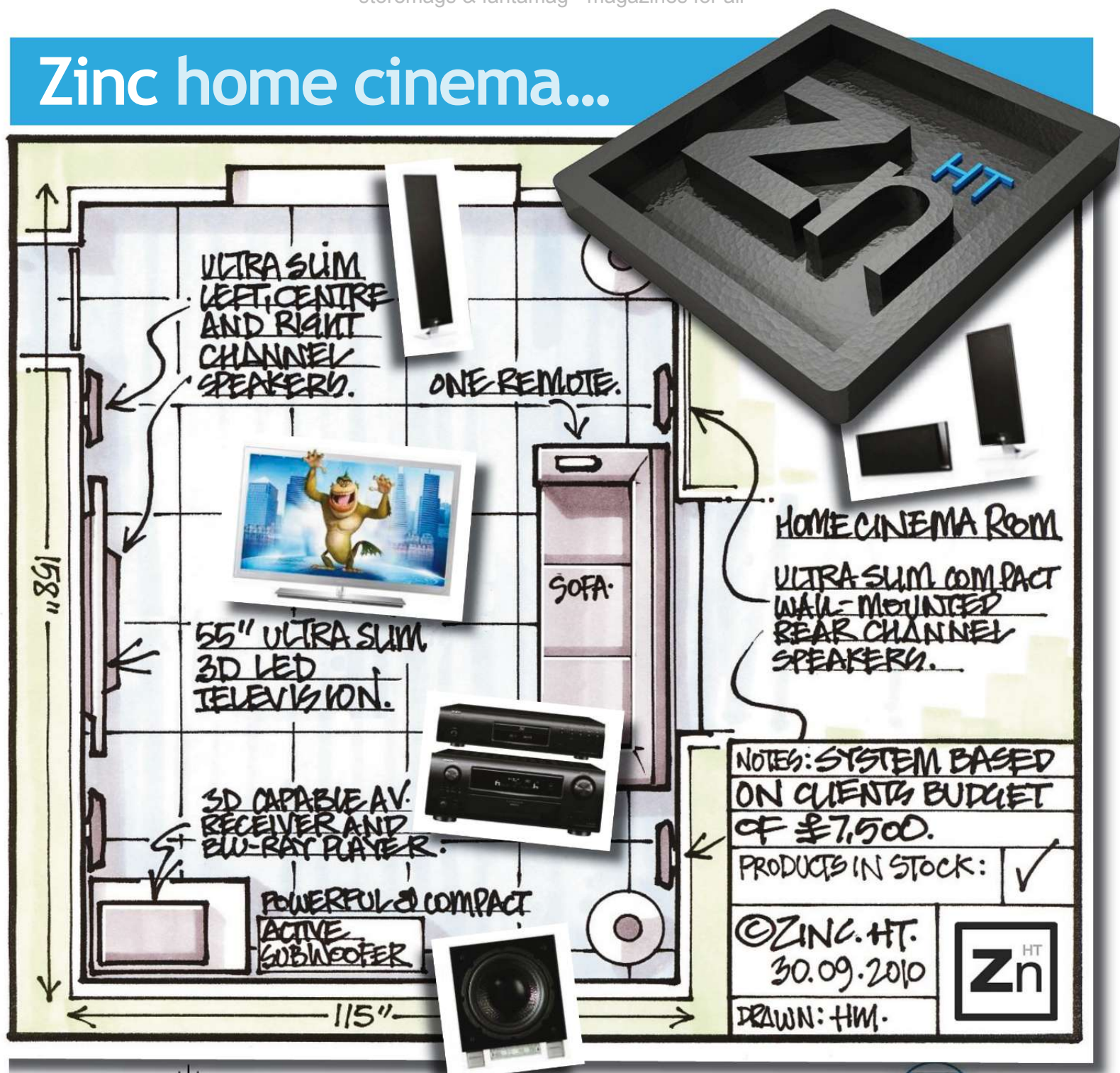
£50 approx,
Xbox 360,
Microsoft Game
Studios



When *Halo: Combat Evolved* appeared nearly 10 years ago it became the definitive console FPS. This final game continues that tradition. The singleplayer mode is short but spectacular; multiplayer packs in heaps of fantastic new ideas and modes.

1 2 3 4 5

Zinc home cinema...



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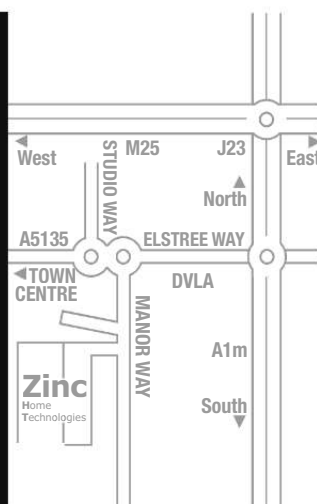
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Canadian bulldog

Adam Rayner tickles a woofer that bites hard



Although I'm not as familiar with Paradigm as with some brands, I've now heard a bunch of its loudspeakers and have learned one essential thing. It uses lots of cone area in its kit, albeit by slapping lots of midrangers into the towers, or by cramming a 10in woofer into the sort of box most normal people would only use for an 8in.

And the Seismic 110 is no exception. It's also known as The Bulldog – after its stubby-footed stance and pugnacious proportions. It's been developed with a nice fat 850W class D amplifier and a speaker driver of bonkers technology.

The back of this woofer driver is bizarrely long. Paradigm calls it 'split coil', meaning that one voice coil wire is right behind the cone, but that the magnet – all 4.5kg of it – has another, in the guts of what is a long and powerful motor structure. It allows two inches of excursion on the piston and, as it's in a sealed enclosure, can drop down to the suspension's limit.

I played with the sweepable and audible phase, and adjusted

crossover and level before playing some 5.1ch DTS music material, before letting *Avatar*'s throbbing start sequence wash over me.

Into the fear zone

The Seismic 110 was musical and grippy, fast with no appreciable overhang. Yet equally it enjoys reaching right down into the fear zone, even in the midst of other bass, and has effortless depth.

A good subwoofer demo occurs later in the film. After being awestruck by the outer-space intro, director James Cameron takes you through space to the planet Pandora in short-winged craft, injecting a massive, hard-edged bass hit as you move from space into the Pandoran atmosphere. Again, the Paradigm handled all of this with **effortless power, skilled articulation and rich profundity**.

So, this is a demon amongst compact subs, which I regard as just as amazing in output for size as Bowers & Wilkins' legendary PV1. This Bulldog's got bite! ●

AV/CV

Product: Stubby, weighty 10in sub with 850W amplification

Positioning: One of many subs from Paradigm, this is one of their more 'lifestyle' options

Peers: B&W PV1; Polk DSW microPRO 2000; Dynaudio Sub 300

→ Specifications

Paradigm Seismic 110 subwoofer

Drive Unit: 1 x 10in mineral-filled polypropylene cone supporting flat diaphragm; suspension with inverted corrugated Santoprene surround

Enclosure: Sealed, cylindrical die-cast monocoque

Frequency Response: 18-150Hz

On board power: 850W

Dimensions: 298(w) x 343(h) x 320(d)mm

Weight: 16.8kg

Connections: Phono stereo line in and single balanced 3-pin XLR input, plus USB for connection of Paradigm's Perfect Bass Kit, a microphone-based auto-EQ algorithm system



HCC VERDICT

Paradigm Seismic 110
£1,250 Approx

Highs: Looks; performance and quality; upgradeability

Lows: Like a small but fast sports car – it's not a budget option

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

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SEVENOAKS
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audio T

→ Specifications

Dolby Digital TrueHD: NO Multichannel PCM only
 DTS-HD Master Audio: NO Multichannel PCM only
 THX: NO
 Multichannel audio: YES 6x 100W
 Multichannel input: YES 5.1 channel
 Multiroom: NO
 AV inputs: YES 3 composite only 4 x digital audio inputs (3 x optical and 1 x coaxial); 4 x analogue stereo
 HDMI input/output: YES 4-in, 1-out (v1.4)
 Video upscaling: NO
 Component input/output: YES 2-in, 1-out
 Dimensions: 432(w) x 141(h) x 359(d)mm
 Weight: 5.5kg
 Features: iPod/iPhone dock connection; Crystal Amp Pro; Auto Sound Calibration; FM RDS tuner with 30 presets; MP3 Enhancer; Smart Volume; Power Bass; Deep Colour & x.v.YCC support; Auto AV Sync; Dolby Pro Logic II; DTS 96:24; 32-bit Sound Field Effect DSPs; Anynet+



Sonic compromise

Samsung's not usually an audio big hitter. **Danny Philips** wonders if the Koreans are spreading their AV dominion a little thinly with this budget amp

Samsung isn't known for its AV receivers, but that hasn't stopped the Korean behemoth having a stab with this affordable 5.1-channel effort. It doesn't have the reputation to rival audio luminaries like Onkyo, Yamaha and Denon, but the HW-C500 may attract owners of other Samsung kit who like their system's collars and cuffs to match.

It looks as sleek as a panther, draped in glossy black and adorned with a couple of quirky touches on the front panel. Disappointingly, there are no sockets on the front panel for plugging in devices on the fly, while rear-panel connectivity is decent but hardly exhaustive. With Samsung

pushing 3D hard it's pleasing that all the HDMI sockets (four in, one out) are specified as v1.4. That means **it'll pass on full HD 3D pictures to a 3D-ready TV as well as extracting the necessary digital audio signal**, which is particularly useful to owners of Samsung's BD-C6900 Blu-ray deck and its single HDMI output.

There's a healthy number of other AV inputs and connections for the supplied iPod/iPhone dock, but Samsung abandons any audiophile ambitions with its springclip speaker terminals, making this feel more like a one-box system without the speakers than serious home cinema hardware.

The disarmingly light bodywork means your chiropractor can sleep easy. Its discrete digital amplifier design does away with many of the weighty components found inside many AVRs.

At its heart is Samsung's new Crystal Amplifier Pro. This group of technologies includes Multi-Variable Feedback, which keeps bothersome noise at bay, and Intelligence Power, which injects extra grunt to avoid clipping when the volume peaks. Power output is rated as 5 x 100W.

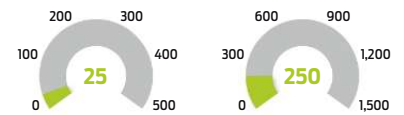
The HW-C500 lacks any HD audio decoding, leaving multichannel LPCM, Dolby Digital and DTS as the only supported formats over HDMI.



Its bare glossy exterior looks the part, but this AVR lacks some key features

→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



Idling: The Samsung will tick over without using too much juice

Powered: In five-channel mode, this low energy consumption reflects the AVR's efficiency

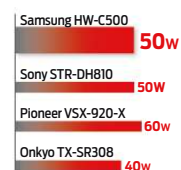
Power ratings: Watts (8Ω, 0.5% THD)



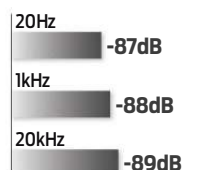
2-channel 8Ω: Not a bad figure for a out-and-out budget amplifier 4Ω

5-channel 8Ω: A noticeable drop relative to two-channel measurements

Untainted: Watts



Signal/noise: dB



Fidelity firewall:

Fidelity firewall is a measurement of power achieved before distortion becomes unacceptable. Our 50W figure was with 0.2% THD

S/N tests: Fair test

results across all frequency ranges

Another let down is the lack of onscreen setup displays, which you'll find on most budget rivals. That said, the clear, logical frontpanel display makes it easy to assign inputs and adjust the audio settings, while the remote is a pleasure to use.

Inexperienced users will appreciate the Auto Sound Calibration mode, although the repeated blast of orchestral music used as a test tone will make you pray for the sweet relief of death.

Testing time

Thankfully, its audio performance is much more tolerable. I dropped the *Avatar* Blu-ray into the tray of my OPPO BDP-831, set the HDMI output to PCM and let the mayhem commence. The soundtrack offers plenty of sonic peaks and troughs to test its dynamic range, but it doesn't come out smelling totally of roses.

The sound is sharp and incisive so it has no trouble communicating the energy of scenes such as the Thanator chase or the Battle for Pandora. The score is reproduced in all its brassy splendour and despite the unorthodox 0-40 volume range, it goes loud enough to let the neighbours know it's movie night.

AV/CV

Product: Entry-level 5.1-channel AV receiver

Position: Entry level in Samsung's budget range

Peers: Yamaha RX-V367; Onkyo TX-SR308; Pioneer VSX-420

There's a respectable level of detail swimming around the soundstage; in between action scenes the Samsung ekes out Pandora's tapestry of chirping wildlife and gently rustling leaves.

There's also a pleasing punch as the robotic battle suits thump down on the ground, while a stampede of Hammerheads charges with a deep, rumble. Surround expansion is also good, as the Samsung whips up a whirlwind of crisp, dizzying effects.

So far, so good, but we're not completely enamoured with it as it often sounds too brash. Clattering machine gun fire strays into teeth-grinding territory, while screeching creatures and clashing metal hardware can sound harsh.

Dialogue is also disappointing. Intelligible yes, but again there's a slight hardness to vocals where there should be smoothness and body.

For £250, we shouldn't expect miracles, but the HW-C500 feels like a compromise. Apart from HDMI v1.4 ports, there's a surprising lack of features for a Samsung product, and the sound quality is too uncouth to place it above a Denon, Onkyo or Pioneer on your shopping list ●



HCC VERDICT

Samsung HW-C500
£250 Approx

Highs: Stylish, affordable and easy to use; 3D-ready HDMI v1.4 sockets; some flashes of sonic brilliance

Lows: No HD audio decoding; harsh sound; no onscreen displays

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Back to the future

Panasonic's flagship 2D plasma is a 21st century marvel, says **Martin Pipe**

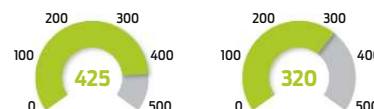


→ Specifications

3D: NO **Full HD:** YES 1080p24
Tuners: YES Freeview HD, Freesat HD and analogue
Component: YES 1 x **HDMI:** YES 4 x HDMI v1.4
PC input: YES D-Sub
Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080 **Sound:** 3 x 10W (2.1)
Brightness (claimed): N/a
Contrast ratio (claimed): 5million:1
Dimensions: 1,224(w) x 771(H) x 85(d)mm **Weight:** 30kg
Features: Viera Cast (wi-fi and Ethernet); EPG; CI & SD slot; Game mode; Picture-in-picture; Viera Link (CEC control); THX mode; NeoPDP panel; Vreal Pro 5 processing; ISF modes; DLNA

→ Tech Labs

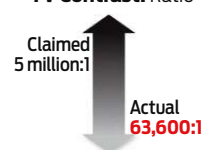
Power consumption: Watts



White screen: Power use drops to approx to 280W with the CATS (light sensing) system activated

Test footage: We noted an average 320W with movie footage and audio. Plasma is power hungry!

TV Contrast: Ratio



Picture: Far short of the claimed 5million:1 figure, but more than sufficient for 'real-world' viewing

Colour temp: Kelvin



Presets: Of the presets, 'warm' is closest to the 6500K – the THX mode isn't far behind. You can achieve 6,500K from the screen's RGB gain/cutoff and gamma adjustments
 1 Cool: 10,600K
 2 Normal: 7400K
 3 Warm: 6,200K
 4 THX: 6100K

I recently stumbled across a 30-year-old article from a trade magazine, which predicted that the domestic TV would become a 'home-entertainment' hub. Looking at TVs like Panasonic's TX-P50V20B, you have to admit they were right.

As if its 'hang-on-the-wall' nature and full HD resolution weren't enough, this bigscreen is liberally endowed with other technology and features. Built in are tuners for standard and high-definition digital satellite (Freesat HD) as well as digital terrestrial (Freeview HD); in a nod to the old, there's an analogue tuner, too.

A CI slot allows CAMs for Pay TV, while a pair of USB ports allow gadgets and storage media to be attached. An SD memory card slot is also provided for playing multimedia files. Other external sources are catered for with four 1080p24-capable HDMI ports. Additional inputs include component, two Scarts and a VGA terminal. One ancient technology – Teletext – is also built in, but along with its slicker digital equivalent.

This TV can be connected to the internet – a wired Ethernet or wi-fi dongle enable it to join your home network and access the Viera Cast

portal, which features Acetrax (movies on demand), YouTube, Picasa, Twitter, news feeds, etc.

The aforementioned multimedia player can also pull music, video or photos from compatible PCs or servers that share your network. Want more? Then buy Panasonic's optional USB camera, and your TV is transformed into a videophone.

Performance

For all this, the TX-P50V20B is easy to set up and use and performance is excellent. Blu-rays deliver a crisp and detailed picture of exemplary contrast range, outstanding black levels and sublime colour. Hi-def TV, from Freesat HD and Freeview HD alike, is also impressive.

SD digital TV does not, alas, fare quite so well, thanks to artefacting and a lack of resolution. Also disappointing is the sound, which is rather flat and imparts a boxy character to speech. Here's one area in which older TVs often surpass the new. The TX-P50V20B's amps and speakers may suffice for everyday use, but for movies and music rely on your separate audio system. Overall, though, this is a 21st-century wonder box. Anyone care to predict what TVs will be like in another 30 years? ●

AV/CV

Product: 50in PDP with Freesat/Freeview HD and VieraCast

Positioning: Near the top of Panasonic's PDP range; 2D version of TX-P50VT20B

Peers: Samsung PS50C6500; Sony KDL-46W5810; LG 50PK990

HCC VERDICT

Panasonic TX-P50V20B
 £1,600 Approx

Highs: Plenty of advanced features; stupendous HD pics

Lows: Only one tuner at a time; disappointing SD pics and sound

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5


Design: 1 2 3 4 5


Features: 1 2 3 4 5


Overall: 1 2 3 4 5


Through a satellite dish or an aerial – either way it's stunning HD!





























TechniSat HDFS and HDFV – the best of both worlds

The HDFS and HDFV digital receivers are designed for the reception of SD and HD programming from the Freesat and Freeview services in the UK. The multi-award winning HDFS Freesat HD satellite receiver was launched last year and TechniSat is confident of repeating this success with the recently released HDFV Freeview HD receiver for the high definition terrestrial channels BBC HD, ITV1 HD and C4HD. As expected from TechniSat, both products offer class-leading functionality including multimedia playback from USB storage devices and networked PCs – as well as DVR functionality via USB to an external hard disk drive. Embracing the concept of the connected home, the receivers can be connected to a home network using a fixed connection or wirelessly with the optional TechniSat WLAN Adaptor. Not only does this allow movies, music and pictures to be streamed directly to the TV, but ensures that the HDFS can access on-line services such as BBC iPlayer.



iMac is over and above

Cliff Joseph considers the home cinema talents of Apple's widescreen iMac



Super hi-def: Ideal for games and pixel-greedy, pro video editing

AV/CV

Product: All-in-one desktop computer

Positioning: Apple's top-of-the-range home computer

Peers: Sony VPCL13M1E

Apple's very proud of the LED display on its new 27in iMac, and emphasises its suitability for watching HD films and TV programmes. The screen does look gorgeous; its 2560x1440 resolution is higher than high definition, and the backlight screen with its IPS technology produces a dazzlingly detailed image.

If you're looking for a powerful games machine then it's perfect. However, **it's a massive case of overkill if you're simply looking for a media centre computer for playing music and video at home.**

The model I tested includes a powerful Intel Core i3 processor running at 3.2GHz, 4GB of memory, a 1TB hard disk, and a Radeon HD5670 graphics card that delivers strong 3D graphics for the latest games. As per all current Macs, it ships with Apple's iLife software suite, which includes the iMovie video editor, along with GarageBand for audio recording and iPhoto for your photo collection.

But there are still a couple of missing features that really ought to

be included in any decent multimedia computer – let alone one at this price. For instance, Apple's Front Row software provides an alternative graphical interface that is well suited to watching videos when you're slumped on the sofa (similar to the popular Plex software), but the company doesn't include the handheld remote control that you need to use the service properly, so you have to pay another £15 for this as an optional extra.

An even bigger omission is the lack of a Blu-ray drive. It is possible to buy an adaptor such as Belkin's AV360 Converter, which allows you to plug an external deck or games console into the iMac, but that will set you back another £100 or so. And I can't help wondering how many people will want to watch full-length films or TV shows on a 27in screen rather than a larger flatscreen TV.

When it comes to home entertainment, I reckon the recently updated Mac Mini, with its ultra-compact design and HDMI interface, is a much better alternative •

→ Specifications

Screen: 2560 x 1440 resolution
Processor: Intel Core i3 @ 3.2GHz
Dimensions: 451(w) x 528(H) x 189(d)mm
Weight: 9.3kg
Connectivity: Ethernet, 802.11n wi-fi, Bluetooth 2.1, 4x USB 2.0, 1x Firewire 800
Audio: Built-in stereo speakers with digital audio in/out

IPS and the iMac

Inexpensive LCD computer monitors commonly use 'twisted nematic' technology, which now has a sufficiently fast response time to avoid the ghosting effect that plagued earlier versions. But TN displays suffer from limited viewing angles, particularly in the vertical direction, where colours can shift so much that they will actually invert past a certain angle. Added to which, most TN panels are 6-bit and will not support 8-bit graphics cards without some colour interpolation.

Apple's solution with the iMac is to use an In-Plane Switching (IPS) display. Developed by Hitachi, this tech uses crystal molecules, which move parallel to the panel plane instead of perpendicular to it, reducing the amount of light scattering, and giving wide viewing angles and good colour reproduction. As a result, though they can be expensive, IPS monitors are generally chosen by graphics and broadcast professionals.

HCC VERDICT

Apple iMac 27in/3.2GHz
 £1,400 Approx

Highs: Super HD LED display; impressive video; 3D performance
Lows: Expensive; there's no Blu-ray drive

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

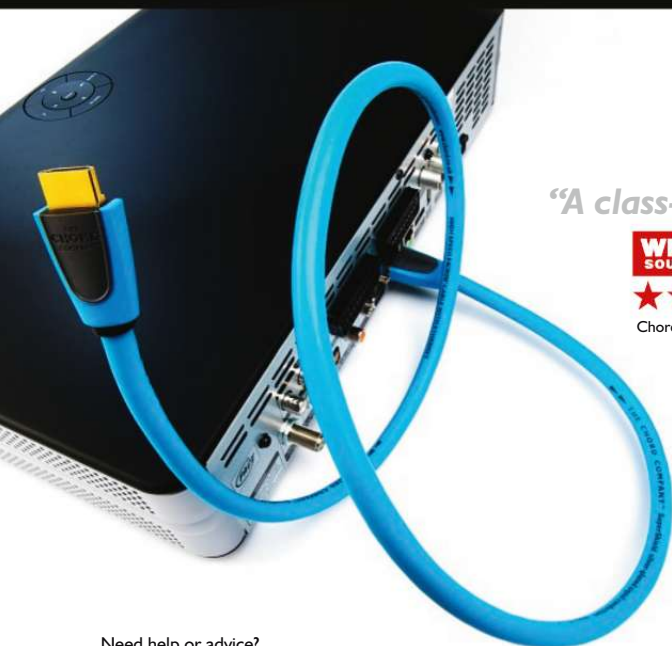
Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

"The screen is a magic medium. It has such power that it can retain interest as it conveys emotions and moods that no other art form can hope to tackle."

Stanley Kubrick

Performance with **PASSION**



"A class-leader"

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION



Chord HDMI SuperShield
Oct 2010

Chord HDMI SuperShield High Speed HDMI Cable with Ethernet

High speed 1080p, 3D compliant HDMI cable.
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To the manner Bjorn

Adam Rayner is digging a clever and classy, Swedish-engineered sub

AV/CV

Product:
12in subwoofer

Positioning:
A good way towards the top of the line with XTZ. Only the version with the PC-controlled DSP is above it

Peers:
Dali Lektor;
Quad L2;
Focal SW 700V

Newish Swedish manufacturer XTZ only sells its subwoofers online in the UK. This practice often means good value, but as you can only audition the kit by paying a deposit for a two-week trial, it has to review well and beat most in its class, irrespective of price.

The XTZ 99 is not too big, but it is almost as clever as the more costly version that comes with a quaint RS232 port for PC control of a DSP system. However, you get the Bang & Olufsen designed ICEpower half-kilowatt amp, plus switches on the back that cater for the sane user through to the bass hooligan.

As well as a serious sweepable phase knob, you also get the regular crossover and gain controls plus 'EQ1' and 'EQ2' switches. It'd help to have the simple legend '+7dB @50Hz' printed under EQ1 and '+7dB @25Hz' under EQ2, though, as these are powerful control choices. These are in addition to the optionally usable paired ports that come with bungs.

The ICEpower amp has a certain effortless amount of pure shove that

does pretty much what any normal user might ask of it. It revelled equally in tight musical bass lines and thunderous cinematic LFE, the latter courtesy of Universal's *Robin Hood* Blu-ray).

The controls are not intuitively simple, but can be mastered by ear and getting your head around which plug, L/R or both (or none) to use in the ports can take some messing with – as recommended in the excellent manual. **But above all, the output is delicious.**

The 12in Peerless XXLS driver is very good indeed and its metal cone is pistonic, uncoloured and tight. The huge magnet on its butt grips the cone in an iron fist, and the porting has been cleverly thought out. It's a straightforward concept: you change the tuning by altering the quantity of the cubic enclosed by the port system and, apart from SVS, I've not seen this method of differential tuning of multiple plugs from any other brand. I kind of want to know what the rest of XTZ's kit is like now...



→ Specifications XTZ 99 W12.18 ICE

Drive Unit: 12in Peerless XXLS (eXpanded eXtra Long Stroke) driver with aluminium cone

Enclosure: Dual front-ported, (with foam plugs for optional use)

Frequency Response: Not quoted (but deep!)

Onboard Power: 515W RMS from ICEpower amp

Dimensions: 420(w) x 495(h) x 520(d)mm

Weight: 29Kg

Connections: Phono stereo line-in and single balanced three-pin XLR input

**LiquorICE
allsort:** Black,
glossy and
driven by
ICEpower
amplification



HCC VERDICT

XTZ 99 W12.18 ICE
£550 Approx

Highs: Power and air-shifting ability equate to high quality output

Lows: The EQ is a very blunt tool; online seller only

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



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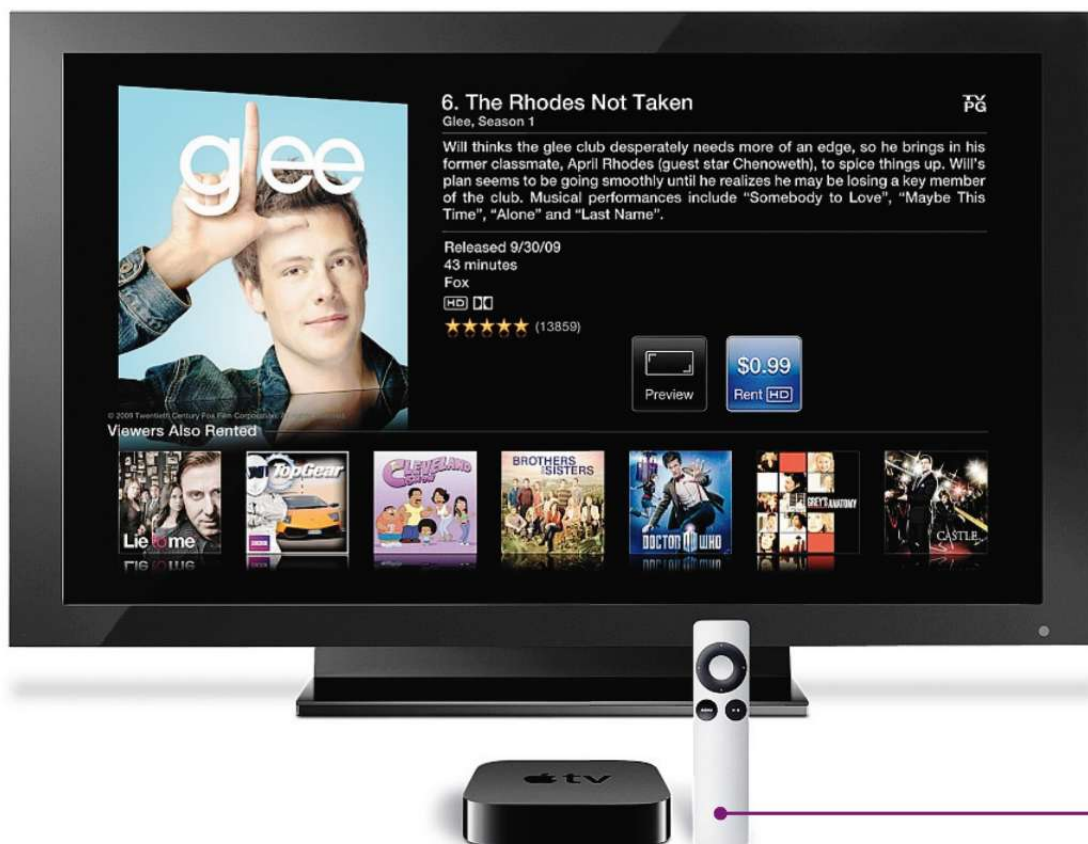
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Finishing touches

Adrian Justins trawls the shelves for those must-have home cinema extras



APPLE TV

Approx £99

Apple has reinvented its internet TV and media streaming device. The new palm-sized box is 20 per cent smaller than the original, has lost its internal storage and is designed for watching movies and TV shows streamed directly from iTunes. The box itself is priced at £99, while HD movies can be rented from £3.49. The idea is to get TV networks on board providing broadcast shows. Viewers simply choose a title, press Play, and in seconds they should be watching the opening credits. Rentals last 30 days, but once activated can be viewed repeatedly for 48 hours. Photos, music and movies can still be streamed from a computer and access is provided to services such as Netflix, YouTube, Flickr and MobileMe.

www.apple.com/uk/appletv/

HCC VERDICT

Better than the original but can it compete with YouSee?

UNIMAX MOUNT

Approx £50-£100

AVF claims to have eradicated concerns about heavy screens with its Unimax range of wall mounts. The top of the range ZML8500 can fix an 80in screen weighing as much as 80kg to a plasterboard wall. It has been successfully tested on such a wall to withstand over 300kg.

The patented mounting system can also be installed in wood and metal stud, brick, dot and dab, concrete or a combination of wall types. The result is completely flexible screen positioning with no restrictions dictated by types of wall and locations of studs.

www.anywall.tv/

HCC VERDICT

You can't put a price on peace of mind





ACER EASYSTORE H341 £TBA

Acer's entry to the world of storing and sharing is this versatile and apparently simple-to-use streaming hard disk network drive. Supplied with 2TB of storage it can automatically back up your computer's library of multimedia content and share it across multiple applications or DLNA compliant devices, such as games consoles and TVs. Up to four drives can be accommodated to boost the unit's capacity to 8TB. When used as a home server it can be remotely accessed through the internet using a secure personal web address.

www.acer.co.uk

HCC VERDICT

We say: A serious looking bit of kit for a serious job

EDIFIER AURORA SPEAKERS

£50



Who says desktop speakers have to be boring boxes? Multimedia speaker specialist Edifier has launched a technicolour range of 2.1 systems that combine a tubular aluminium subwoofer with stereo spheres. These are available in 10 colours including Asphalt Grey, Electric Blue, Liquid Silver, Luminous Yellow, Passion Pink and Stormy Black. The 15W sub is bass-ported, while the 3.5W full-range spherical satellites have a metal weave speaker grille. All three speakers are magnetically shielded. Also available in.

www.edifier-audio.co.uk

HCC VERDICT

We say: looks as good as it sounds

RED EYE MINI

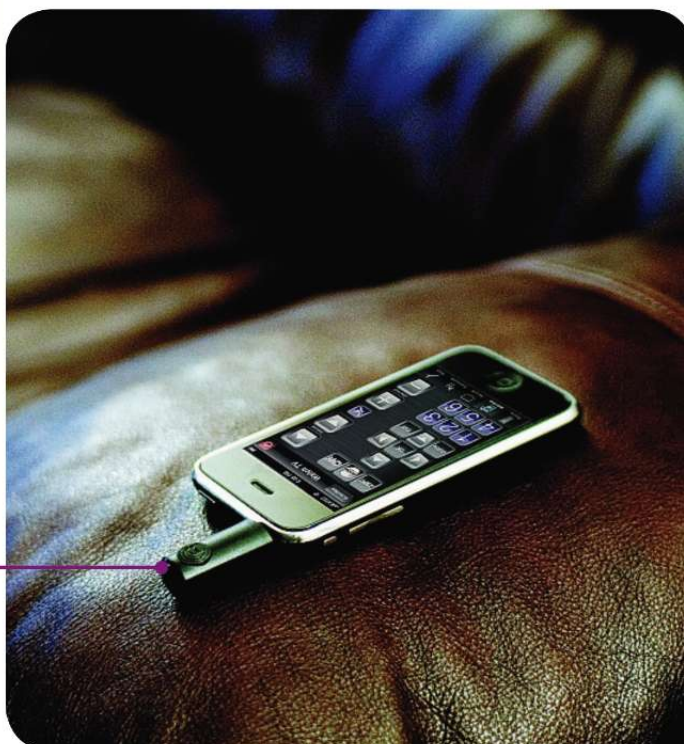
£40

There are various apps that convert an iPod Touch (or similar) into a remote control, but these require a wireless connection and a networked device. Not so the Red Eye Mini, an app with a dongle that plugs in to an Apple player's headphone socket (from where it draws its power and signals) and can operate around 45,000 products controlled using infrared signals: televisions, set-top boxes, DVD and Blu-ray players, home cinema receivers, game consoles and more.

<http://thinkflood.com/>

HCC VERDICT

Yet another reason to get an iPod



Clips...

Small items that will make a big difference to your system

Chord Company SuperShield HDMI cable with Ethernet

From £50



The Chord Company has added Ethernet capability plus an optimised

audio return connection to its SuperShield HDMI cable. Available in 1m (£50), 2m (£60) and 3m (£70) lengths, the cable now delivers improved performance with the introduction of a gold-plated die-cast plug, engineered for a more secure connection. All signal conductors are now 26 AWG silver-plated copper for maximum conductivity. The SuperShield supports all HDMI audio formats and of course 1080p 3D video.

www.chord.co.uk

Devolo dLAN AVpass kit



£100

Devolo has created a kit that enables Freesat

TVs and set-top boxes to receive internet TV services such as BBC's iPlayer and online radio stations. It uses a broadband connection taken from a router's Ethernet port into the mains power supply socket via adaptors provided. Each adaptor offers its own three-pin mains socket. The maker claims a 200Mbps signal can be transmitted along powerlines up to 300m long from extruded aluminium that helps prevent RFI pickup.

www.devolo.co.uk

Battery Wizard

£20

Online retailer Arista Computers is selling a battery charger that works with ordinary non-rechargeable alkaline batteries as well as regular NiMH and NiCad rechargeables. The charger has a patented pulse technology system to recharge most types of batteries (AA, AAA, C, D and 9v) up to 10 times. A built-in microprocessor detects and rejects faulty cells.

www.aristacomputers.com

**TEXT
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Win! Win! Win!

Predators Blu-ray and a Philips BD player

To celebrate the release of *Predators* on Blu-ray, we've hunted down (with the kind assistance of Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment) 10 copies of the disc, and a Philips BDP2500/05 Blu-ray player to give away to HCC readers.

Predators (on sale on Blu-ray November 1, priced £25 approx) is the new sci-fi smash from producer Robert Rodriguez and director Nimrod Antal. Featuring great performances from the likes of Adrian Brody and Laurence Fishburne, jaw-dropping set pieces, stunning SFX and the coolest movie monsters of all time, it's an instant home cinema classic.

The winner of our competition will also take home Philips' BDP2500/05, a stylish Profile 2.0 Blu-ray player with

DivX Ultra playback. Nine runners up will receive copies of *Predators* on Blu-ray.

Question: who starred in the original Predator movie?

- A:** Sylvester Stallone
B: Bruce Willis
C: Arnold Schwarzenegger

Text HCCPRED, space and your answer A, B or C, followed by your name and address to 87474.

Texts cost 50p plus your standard network tariff. The closing date for entries is midnight November 30, 2010. Only UK entries will be accepted. Enter for free at www.futurecomps.co.uk/hccpred



Also up for grabs: new software releases!

Killers



This Katherine Heigl/Ashton Kutcher action comedy explodes onto DVD and Blu-ray on 25 October priced £20/£25 respectively. Courtesy of Lionsgate Home Entertainment,

we have five copies of the Blu-ray to give away to lucky readers. All you have to do to enter is visit the website at www.futurecomps.co.uk/hcckillers, and answer the question:

Katherine Heigl also starred in...?

- A:** Knocked Up **B:** The Back Up Plan
C: I Love You Philip Morris

The Disappearance of Alice Creed



This brilliantly original British crime thriller is available to buy now on DVD and Blu-ray, priced £18, courtesy of Icon Home Entertainment.

To be in with a chance of getting one of the five copies we're giving away, simply point your browser at www.futurecomps.co.uk/hccalice, and answer the question:

Which British actress plays the role of Alice Creed?

- A:** Kelly Brook **B:** Gemma Arterton
C: Sienna Miller

Chuck: Season Three



Bag yourself a copy of *Chuck: Season Three*, out on DVD on 25th October. Packed full of comedy, espionage, action and even a little bit of romance, our favourite secret agent continues to protect

the fate of mankind in his uniquely geeky way. To win one of three DVD box sets, check out the website www.futurecomps.co.uk/hccchuck, and answer the question:

Which of these characters does NOT have a secret identity?

- A:** Batman **B:** Spiderman
C: Inspector Gadget

Chuck: Season Three ©2010 Warner Bros. Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Closing date for all competitions is November 30, 2010

The small print: By taking part in a Competition, you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules which are summarised below but can be viewed in full at www.futureTCS.com. All correct answers are placed in a draw and the winners chosen at random. Proof of posting (if relevant) shall not be deemed proof of delivery. Entries must be submitted by an individual (not via any agency or similar) and, unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. The Company reserves the right in its sole discretion to substitute any prize with cash or a prize of comparable value. Unless otherwise stated, the Competition is open to all GB residents of 18 years and over, except employees of Future Publishing and any party involved in the competition or their households. By entering a Competition you give permission to use your name, likeness and personal information in connection with the Competition and for promotional purposes. All entries will become the property of the Company upon receipt and will not be returned. You warrant that the Competition entry is entirely your own work and not copied or adapted from any other source. If you are a winner, you may have to provide additional information. Details of winners will be available on request within three months of the closing date. Receipt of any prize is conditional upon you complying with (amongst other things) the Competition Rules. You acknowledge and agree that neither the Company nor any associated third parties shall have any liability to you in connection with your use and/or possession of your prize. Promoted by Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW

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- ▶ Also available in 50"

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- ▶ 100,000:1 Contrast Ratio / Full HD / HDMI
- ▶ Detail Clarity Processor 3



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- ▶ PHL Reference Chroma Processor Plus
- ▶ Adaptive High Precision 4:4:4

£109.00



Panasonic HDCSDT750EB

- ▶ Full HD 3MOS Camcorder with 3D
- ▶ Conversion Lens for High Definition 3D Video Recording



£1299.00

Panasonic HDCTM55EBK

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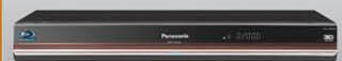


£349.00

Panasonic DMPBDT300EG

- ▶ Full HD 3D Blu-Ray Disc™ Player
- ▶ New UniPhier® Image Processor

£289.00



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The image shows three LCD televisions of different brands (Regza, Aquos, and Bravia) arranged on a wooden floor. The Regza TV in the background shows a close-up of a person's face. The Aquos TV in the middle shows two young men in a comic book store. The Bravia TV in the foreground shows a person in a superhero costume. The TVs are tilted at different angles, creating a dynamic composition.

LCD's got talent

Tantalisingly priced and perfect for main or second room use, 32in LCD TVs continue to sell like hot cakes. So we got hot cake-lovin' **John Archer** to run his eye over five popular models

**TOSHIBA
32AV713**

£360 Approx

This entry-level Toshiba will be hoping to entice price-conscious consumers with its £360 tag. Its 1,366 x 768 native resolution may put off some buyers, though

**SHARP
LC-32DH510E**

£430 Approx

Another TV that lacks a full HD 1,920 x 1,080 resolution, but Sharp's model will surprise many with its incredibly handy USB PVR functionality

**PANASONIC
TX-L32S20**

£600 Approx

While its plasma screens are almost uniformly excellent, does Panasonic have enough L know-how to compete at this level of the market?

**SAMSUNG
LE-32C580**

£450 Approx

A feature-heavy 32-incher from the flatscreen giant, but the online Internet@TV portal has been left off to keep the price point low

**SONY
KDL-32NX503**

£650 Approx

This 32in L offering online functionality, via Sony's Bravia Internet Video portal, although that is reflected by its high price tag

THE TEST

The 32in chunk of the TV market might not be the most glamorous, but it continues to be one of the most popular. And it's easy to see why. For, as well as appealing to the more conservative end of the market as a main room set – to the sort of person just stepping up from, say, an old 28in or 32in CRT model – 32in TVs make ideal second-room options. And even though we've focused on reasonably affordable models for this group test, we've confronted some pretty long feature lists, proving just how seriously the TV manufacturers continue to treat the 32in segment of the market.

As usual, all five screens were tested by HCC in both a domestic environment and in our Tech Labs, the latter adding some scientific data to support our subjective findings.

Too much for too little

Panasonic turns to LCD with rather hit and miss results



→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



White screen:

The Panasonic used 80W with our 100IRE test pattern

Test footage:

Consumption decreases by approximately 10W with movie footage

TV contrast: ratio



Colour temp: Kelvin



Picture: A quite low real world figure is only to be expected at the entry-level end of Panasonic's range. Dynamic mode ups it to around 2,000:1

Presets: No user adjustments here – just a choice of three presets. However, the 'warm' mode was very close to the 6500K 'white point' deemed ideal for film/video by the SMPTE
Cool: 11,800K
Normal: 7,300K
Warm: 6,400K

The letter S in L32S20 reveals that this TV sits fairly low on Panasonic's current list. This means, most notably, that unlike models further up the maker's range, the L32S20 only has a Freeview HD tuner, not one for Freesat HD.

No other brands of 32in TV have dual HD tuners either, of course. But it's a fact prospective Panasonic buyers need to be aware of if they happen to live in an area not currently served by Freeview HD.

The L32S20 is, surprisingly, slightly better looking than many Panasonic TVs, thanks to the application of a lightly textured finish to its bezel. Though it's still hardly a design classic, especially when you clock its distinctly chunky profile.

Connection highlights include: three HDMI's (with one v1.4 that can send audio out to an external AV receiver); Ethernet; and an SD card slot for photo and movie playback.

Before you start dreaming of surfing Panasonic's VieraCast online service, though, the Ethernet port is only there because it's required by the Freeview HD tuner. You can't

even use it to access a networked DLNA PC.

Using the L32S20 is straightforward, if rather dull. A solid if uninspired remote control hooks up reasonably well with some rather dated-looking onscreen menus.

Packs some processing

Given that the L32S20 is far from the cheapest TV in this group test, it's a relief to find it packing a couple of notable picture processing features: 100Hz, aided by Intelligent Frame Creation (IFC), which calculates and inserts extra, new intermediate frames of image data to make motion look more fluid.

This sort of motion processing won't suit everyone, but at least Panasonic's engine goes about its business reasonably cleverly, throwing

up less unwanted side effects than some rival systems – provided you avoid its highest setting, at any rate.

Less controversial strengths of the L32S20's pictures include some decently sharp and clean standard-

Net neglect:

Although the L32S20 has an Ethernet port, it won't hook in to Panasonic's VieraCast portal

definition playback (provided you don't set the Resolution Enhancer feature too high), rich and generally believable colours, and a palpable sense of extra sharpness and detail when you switch over to high-definition viewing.

However, that sharpness is reduced somewhat when viewing images that contain a lot of motion, such as those seen during any number of the action sequences from *Kick Ass* on Blu-ray, thanks to some residual motion blur – despite the efforts of the IFC system.

The set's biggest problem, though, is its pretty unimpressive black level response. Dark scenes look slightly greyed over, especially if a shot has a mix of light and dark content, and the darkest areas also look rather hollow and short on shadow detail.

Sonically, the L32S20 is actually rather better than most 32in flat TVs. This isn't immediately apparent, since its two provided audio presets are both pretty unimpressive. But spending a little time with the provided graphical equaliser can yield worthwhile results.

Samsung stumbles

Its latest affordable 32in TV doesn't quite keep the home fires burning



→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



White screen:
Another fairly typical measurement for a 32in LCD

Test footage: A minor decrease in consumption when watching live test footage

TV Contrast: ratio



Picture: A quite lowly measurement, but Dynamic mode does bump to it 3062:1

Colour temp: Kelvin



Presets: The Samsung offers a wide selection of user adjustable options, via which it can be tweaked to achieve the optimum colour temperature of 6,500K
Cool: 8,890K
Normal: 7,990K
Warm 1: 6,775K
Warm 2: 5,793K

Red setter:

Samsung still likes to give its lower-end TVs a red-tinted bezel

Samsung was unquestionably the star of last year's 32in TV scene, with its B550 and B650 models looking like minor classics, especially given their strikingly low prices. So our hopes were high for the new 32C580.

We found ourselves feeling slightly disappointed, though, on account of the set's design. With its subtle infusion of red and tasteful use of a transparent outer trim around the main bezel, it somehow doesn't move us on from last year's models. In fact, it feels like a step backwards.

The 32C580 is very affordable at £450, but in return it doesn't initially feel particularly feature-rich. There's no 100Hz processing, for instance, nor any other significant motion processing tools. Nor is there any online functionality, despite the set having an Ethernet port.

There's a decent array of other multimedia support, though. Two USBs allow you to playback JPEG, MP3 and video files, while the Ethernet permits streaming from a DLNA PC – a notable advance on the

Panasonic L32S20's feature list that could prove very useful, especially in a second room situation.

The 32C580 also adds a fourth HDMI to proceedings versus three on the Panasonic, and carries a quite extensive suite of picture fine-tuning tools, including a colour management system. The set's system for accessing its tweaks is pretty nice, too. Onscreen menus are colourful, high resolution and reasonably easy to follow, and the remote control is sensibly laid out, if not particularly nice to look at.

Bit of a blur

Just as things are looking up, the 32C580's picture quality, sadly, disappoints. For once more, it feels like a step backwards from last year, for two main reasons. First, there's clear evidence of motion blur, especially during standard-definition viewing. And second, dark scenes on our *Kick Ass* Blu-ray look a little more cloudy and grey than we'd expected or hoped.

Another smaller issue finds one or two colour tones looking slightly

unnatural, but there's good compensation for this, at least, from the impressively vibrant and dynamic saturations on show with *Kick Ass*'s extravagantly-hued superhero costumes. Plus the colour management system gives you some scope for improving things.

Pictures are ferociously bright and aggressive too, which is ideal if the TV is going to be used in a very bright environment.

The detailing is good except, for when the motion blur gets in the way, and standard-definition pictures are upscaled cleanly.

One area where the 32C580 improves on last year's Samsung models, moreover, is its sound, which is slightly more powerful and dynamic – though still too bass-light to be truly satisfying.

In the end, though, while the 32C580 is a perfectly enjoyable TV and good value, we can't shake the feeling that either Samsung has stepped backwards in a bid to keep its prices low, or else other brands have caught up rather quickly.

Back to basics

An affordable offering that eschews Sharp's new Quattron technology



Off the scale: Full HD Blu-ray sources are downscaled to fit this TV's 1,366 x 768 native resolution

With a price tag of just £430, Sharp's 32DH510E is clearly designed to appeal to your wallet. However, to hit this price the set asks you to swallow more compromises than we feel comfortable with.

These start with its cheap and plasticky build quality, which looks old-fashioned on account of an unusually chunky rear.

Moreover, it only has two HDMI connections, and there's no D-Sub PC port or Ethernet jack, either.

This latter absentee makes us realise that the 32DH510E doesn't carry a Freeview HD tuner – just a standard-definition Freeview one. Then there's the TV's native resolution, which is an HD Ready 1,366 x 768 rather than 1080p.

Heading into the 32DH510E's onscreen menus, there are few features worth mentioning, and fewer if any picture processing or micro-management tweaks.

On the upside, the set's onscreen menus are really good: clean, bright, imaginatively organised and pretty.

Given the 32DH510E's apparent reluctance to push the feature boat out, it's a surprise to find it sporting a USB port capable of playing a wide array of video, music and photo file formats. This turns to incredulity as it transpires that **you can use the USB to record from the Freeview tuner to USB memory devices** (of 1GB or bigger capacities).

While the recording feature might seem out of place amid an otherwise very spartan list, it actually makes good sense for a 32in TV – especially in a second room, where you might not want the clutter of an external recording device.

A bit soft

This brief upsurge in the 32DH510's fortunes doesn't last long, however. We quickly spotted a few flaws as we started to watch its pictures.

For instance, its standard-definition pictures look soft, despite the set's lower native resolution potentially giving it an edge in this department. This is at least

partly down to some pretty average motion reproduction.

Colours look slightly washed out during a *Kick Ass* Blu-ray run-through too, especially when considered against the rich saturations evident with Samsung's 32C580.

Our *Kick Ass* Blu-ray also looked a touch noisier on the 32DH510E than it does on our other contenders, perhaps because it's downscaled. Other issues include a slightly flat and cloudy look to dark scenes, and a very limited viewing angle, even by LCD's usually pretty unimpressive standards.

On the upside, pictures become startlingly detailed and defined with HD viewing, with good textures and less evidence of motion blur. Brightness levels are good, too, so that you can sometimes forget about the slightly faded colour palette.

The 32DH510E's pictures never rise above average, though, and occasionally look slightly worse. So by the time the average pictures have been joined by some entirely average sonics, it's fair to say we end up with a TV that's, well, average.

→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



White screen: The lowest white screen consumption in this group test...

Test footage: ...although it increases slightly with movie footage and audio

TV Contrast: ratio



Picture: Contrast ratio isn't that impressive at 2100:1 (and 3200:1 in Dynamic mode)

Colour temp: Kelvin



Preset: You can only alter colour temperature in User Mode, and there's no manual adjustment of the RGB levels to obtain perfect 6,500K point
Cool: 9465K
Medium: 7426K
Warm: 7032K

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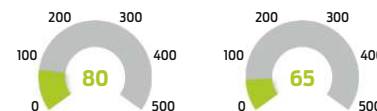
Welcome to the world

Sony proves that online TVs don't have to cost the earth



→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



White screen:
With Light Sensor on
consumption drops to
75W in a bright room/
40W in a dark room

Test footage: There's
a decent drop
in consumption
when watching
movie footage

TV Contrast: ratio



Picture: An excellent
real world figure for a
CCFL LCD, which can be
boosted to 112,000:1 if
Vivid mode is activated

Colour temp: Kelvin



Presets: A choice
of four, the best of
which ('warm 1') is
closest to 6500K. A full
range of adjustments
are available in
the 'Advanced'
settings menu
Cool: 9,300K
Neutral: 7900K
Warm 1: 6,600K
Warm 2: 5,700K

With online functionality shaping up to be the next big TV battleground, we were disappointed that this is the only TV in the group to feature it, which doubtless explains why it's also the most expensive. But the 32NX503's internet talents more than make up for the paucity of online wares elsewhere in this test.

The 32NX503 is really rather lovely to behold, sporting as it does Sony's Monolithic design, complete with sheer, one-layer, glossy black fascia and gentle optional back tilt. The look is not especially imaginative, but somehow it manages to be seriously imposing.

The 32NX503's online features mean there's an Ethernet port among its socketry, and this can also be used to jack into a DLNA PC, or access potential future interactive services via the built-in Freeview HD tuner.

Other key connections include an impressive four HDMI's and a USB port capable of playing a good selection of photo, music and video formats, as well as taking an optional Wi-Fi dongle.

Going back to the online features, we find Sony's Bravia Internet Video platform arguably the most satisfying system currently found on a TV. This is in part a result of the impressively graphics-heavy user interface and partly down to the wealth of full streaming video content available. The stability of the streaming service also has some part to play, even when using a pretty uninspiring 2MB broadband pipe.

In an ideal world, Sony could perhaps have added open internet access to its ring-fenced service. But the limited offerings are plentiful enough to keep you going.

Other features of the 32NX503 include 100Hz processing and Sony's Bravia Engine 3 video processing system, both of which add to the online content in justifying the TV's relatively high price.

Great expectations

With so many features at its disposal, we expected the 32NX503's pictures to be easily the best in this roundup. But while they're certainly not bad, they're not particularly outstanding.

Watch the shadows:
This screen's excellent blacks still offer fine detail

The main problem is colours, which aren't as dynamic and vibrant as we would have expected. But it also suffers from a little more motion blur than we would have anticipated, given that it's got both Bravia Engine 3 and 100Hz processing on board.

In the plus column, **pictures look impressively sharp with our Kick Ass Blu-ray except where they are softened by motion blur.**

There's lots of high-definition detail on show, too, and it produces the best black level performance, achieving really deep blacks that still retain decent shadow detail. This fine contrast effort will give it a real edge with movie fans.

The screen is also unusually good at upscaling standard-definition sources to its full HD resolution, adding plenty of detail yet without exaggerating source noise.

The audio is only par for the 32in flatscreen course, with minimal bass and a constrained dynamic range. But cinematic black levels and excellent multimedia support do enough to make it our favourite TV. ➤

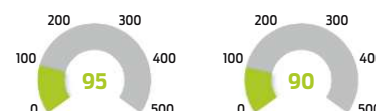
Pared down contender

Toshiba's entry in this group test might lack pizzazz, but it's still good value



→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



White screen: Power consumption is in line with the other TVs in this group test

Test footage: A small drop in consumption during our live footage test. This TV doesn't feature any eco modes

TV Contrast: ratio



Picture: The lowest contrast ratio of our quintet. During the OIRE test, the backlight was noticeably present

Colour temp: Kelvin



Presets: Out of the box the 'warm' mode was the most accurate measuring an excellent 6,600K. The white balance is easily calibrated to achieve 6500K.
Cool: 10,400K
Medium: 8500K
Warm: 6600K
User: 9300K

Toshiba's 32AV713 wears its heart on its sleeve – or rather, its price tag. It's not just the cheapest TV in this group test, it's one of the cheapest 32-inchers we've ever come across. Cue a search for cut corners.

For starters, its distinctly plasticky finish detracts from its otherwise quite cute design. Nor does it seduce potential buyers with its meagre two HDMI ports and its lack of an Ethernet port, DLNA PC connection and Freeview HD tuner.

More price-induced compromises include the screen's HD Ready 1,366 x 768 native resolution and the fact there's no 100Hz processing.

But it's not all bad news. For instance, a USB port can play JPEG photos and MP3s from USB memory sticks, plus there's a D-Sub PC input – something we normally can't expect as a given below £400.

Even more striking is the number of picture adjustments the 32AV713 provides. We'd only expected to find the absolute basics on such a cheap TV, but instead you are given such finery as colour transient

improvement processing and a remarkably full colour management system that really comes in handy, as we'll discover.

We're engaged!

The 32AV713's biggest coup for its money, though, has to be its surprisingly engaging picture performance. Tellies as budget as the 32AV713 are generally pretty grim in the colour and motion departments in particular, but Toshiba has managed to achieve likeable results in both of these key areas.

Colours look punchy, reasonably natural (especially after a little bit of fine tuning), and well defined, while **motion really doesn't smear or lose resolution badly at all for a set with no 100Hz processing.**

This motion clarity helps HD images look acceptably crisp and detailed (though there's still room for improvement), and even standard-definition pictures are far from the soft, mushy mess we'd expected for £360. Inevitably, the 32AV713 isn't

Pixel paucity: Tosh's bargain-priced screen only offers a 1,366 x 768 resolution – but will you notice at this size?

entirely immune to its price, though. There's clear evidence of greyness over dark scenes, the set's viewing angle is extremely limited, and while moving objects might not blur badly, they do suffer with judder.

The 32AV713 has a couple of practical issues, too. First of all, its picture presets seem unusually poorly calibrated, making a visit to the set's drab picture tweaking menus a crucial task.

Second, there seems slightly more input lag than we noted with the other screens, which could lead to die-hard *Call of Duty* online players getting wasted by bitch-talking American pre-teens even more than is usual.

Also forcing us to finish on a slightly unfair downer is the 32AV713's sound. For while no TV in this roundup has exactly blown our audio socks off, this Toshiba is clearly the feeblest of them all, with a paper-thin soundstage and aggravating tendency to sound compressed to the point of distortion when pushed hard with *Kick Ass*'s action sequences.

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Final standings

We should say right away that one of the sets featured today totally blew us away with its performance quality, and one or two left us underwhelmed in terms of features and build quality.

But, of course, we chose to focus on the reasonably priced end of the 32in market, so it's probably unreasonable to expect miracles. And with their prices taken into account, three of them at least make genuinely attractive options.

The set that struggles most is Sharp's 32DH510. Initially its low price raised our interest, but the more time we spent with it, the more corner-cutting we found – especially

compared with Samsung's 32C580, which costs just £20 more but adds much better socketry, performance, build quality and, most importantly of all, a Freeview HD tuner.

The Samsung set also casts a rather unforgiving spotlight on Panasonic's L32S20, which costs £150 more but doesn't really deliver a significant enough performance boost to justify the price hike.

Much stronger competition for the Samsung model comes from Toshiba's 32AV713 and Sony's 32NX503. The Toshiba is a really startling option for penny pinchers, delivering a picture performance much better than you'd expect for a

32in LCD TV costing a lot less than £400. Its feeble sonics are probably only good enough for second room use, but given how cheap the TV is, you could always add a small separate audio system at a later date without breaking the bank.

If you can afford it, Sony's 32NX503 is the all-round best TV featured in this group test. Its impressive contrast efforts give it a leg up in performance, and its online features are far more than just a gimmicky add-on.

We'd suggest that you decide on your budget and see which of our Toshiba, Samsung or Sony models you can comfortably stretch to ●



Top 10 console games

Stick a 32in TV in your bedroom and get stuck in to one of these HD games, while your other half is hogging the living room...



Halo Reach → Xbox 360

This long-awaited, first-person shooter really lives up to the massive hype that preceded its release. Awesome in scale and a joy to play, it'll have your thumbs aching in no time

Red Dead Redemption → PS3/Xbox 360

From the makers of the *Grand Theft Auto* series comes this Wild West epic, where you can do everything from hunt squirrels to storm a Mexican fort. Rootin'-tootin' fun

FI 2010 → PS3/Xbox 360

The biggest-ever release from Codemasters, *FI 2010* is a must-buy for petrol heads. The game engine is frighteningly realistic and the graphics are uniformly stunning

Split Second: Velocity → PS3/Xbox 360

Screech, vroom, bang, smash! For a completely different take on the driving game genre than *FI 2010*, spin up this madcap racer from Disney Interactive. You'll feel like you're in your own Jerry Bruckheimer movie!

Heavy Rain → PS3

The closest thing yet to an interactive movie, *Heavy Rain* features astonishing HD visuals and Hollywood-style surround sound audio

Dead Rising 2 → PS3/Xbox 360

This recently-released sequel is yet another slice of zombie-killing brilliance from Capcom. You'll never tire of annihilating the swarms of undead – up to 7,000 onscreen at once, is the claim – with a machine gun-toting teddy bear

FIFA 2011 → PS3/Xbox 360

Replace the misery of England's World Cup performance by taking your local team to the top of the Premier League. The best football sim yet from the EA Sports gang

ModNation Racers (pictured) → PS3

This cross between *LittleBigPlanet* and *Super Mario Kart* is great for two-player laughs, online racing and creating your own courses – the latter is brilliantly simple and addictive

Mafia II → PS3/Xbox 360

Strut the streets of fictional city Empire Bay in this 1940s set third-person gangster adventure. If sharp suits, Tommy guns and people called Vito are your thing, you'll love this!

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 → PS3/Xbox 360

Okay, so you don't get to cavort with barmaids and glamour models, but when you can't get out on the links 'cos it's raining cats and dogs, this is the next best thing. In fact, it may even be better

1ST



HCC VERDICT

Sony 32NX503
£650 Approx

Highs: Online features; multimedia talents; design; connectivity; contrast and HD detailing

Lows: Colours lack dynamism; traces of motion blur; average audio

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

→ Specifications

3D: NO

HD Ready: YES Full HD

Tuner: YES Freeview HD

Component video: YES one

HDMI: YES 4 x v1.3

PC input: YES

Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080

Sound: 2x 10W

Brightness: N/A

Contrast ratio (claimed): 'High'

Dimensions: 825(w) x 517(h) x

102(d)mm

Weight: 13kg

Features: USB port for playing JPEG, MP3 and various video files including DivX; online services with optional wi-fi; DLNA PC connectivity; 100Hz processing; Bravia Engine 3 processing; 2 Scarts (RGB); Live Colour processing

2ND



HCC VERDICT

Samsung 32C580
£450 Approx

Highs: Bright colourful pictures; multimedia support; good value for a Freeview HD TV

Lows: Black levels; a few rogue colours, some motion blur

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

→ Specifications

3D: NO

HD Ready: YES Full HD

Tuner: YES Freeview HD

Component video: YES one

HDMI: YES 4 x v1.3

PC input: YES D-Sub

Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080

Sound: 2x 10W

Brightness: N/A

Contrast ratio (claimed): 'High'

Dimensions: 793.7(w) x 494.3(h) x

78(d)mm

Weight: 9.4kg

Features: Ethernet connection for Freeview HD and DLNA PC; MPEG noise reduction; film mode; digital noise filter; shadow detail booster; fleshtone adjust; gamma adjust; 1 Scart (RGB)



3RD

**HCC VERDICT**

Toshiba 32AV713
£360 Approx

Highs: Great value; colour and motion handling; multimedia support; colour management

Lows: No Freeview HD; weak audio; poor black levels

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

→ Specifications

3D: NO

HD Ready: YES

Tuner: YES Freeview (not HD)

Component video: YES one

HDMI: YES 2 x v1.3

PC input: YES

Resolution: 1,366 x 768

Sound: 2x10W

Brightness: 450cd/m²

Contrast ratio (claimed): 12,000:1

Dimensions: 799(w) x 524(h) x 95(d)mm

Weight: 10.7kg

Features: USB port for playing JPEG and MP3 files; Toshiba's Active Vision processing; colour management system; 2 Scarts (1 RGB)

4TH

**HCC VERDICT**

Panasonic L32S20
£600 Approx

Highs: Standard-definition pictures; good colours, sharpness and connectivity; reasonable audio

Lows: Black levels; small traces of motion blur; a little pricey

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

→ Specifications

3D: NO

HD Ready: YES Full HD

Tuner: YES Freeview HD

Component video: YES one

HDMI: YES 2 (1 x v1.4, 2 x v1.3)

PC input: YES D-Sub

Resolution: 1,920 x 1,080

Sound: 2x10W

Brightness: N/A

Contrast ratio (claimed): 20,000:1

Dimensions: 798(w) x 511(h) x 83(d)mm

Weight: 9.5kg

Features: 100Hz; Intelligent Frame Creation processing; V-Real Pro 4 picture processing; HDMI CEC; SD card slots for media playback (JPEG, MPEG2/AVCHD); 2 Scart connections (both RGB); Ethernet connection for Freeview HD; Resolution Enhancer processing

5TH

**HCC VERDICT**

Sharp 32DH510
£430 Approx

Highs: Bright, sharp pictures; USB file compatibility; direct recording to USB

Lows: Black levels; anaemic colours; no Freeview HD tuner

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

→ Specifications

3D: NO

HD Ready: YES

Tuner: YES Freeview (not HD)

Component video: YES one

HDMI: YES 2 x v1.3

PC input: NO

Resolution: 1,368 x 768

Sound: 2x10W

Brightness: 400cd/m²

Contrast ratio (claimed): 25,000:1

Dimensions: 776(w) x 562(h) x 95(d)mm

Weight: 11.1kg

Features: USB port for playing JPEG, BMP, PNG MP3, AAC, PCM (.WAV), MPEG 1/2/4, H.264, DivX and XviD files; able to record Freeview tuner to USB storage drive (min 1GB); 2 Scarts (1 RGB); colour temp adjustment



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Have you ever thought of upgrading your home cinema set up but aren't quite sure how to go about it? There are so many things to bear in mind: what equipment to buy, how it works, fitting it all together, making sure you're getting the best performance from your new goodies... It's a minefield if you're not an expert. What you need is somebody to do the hard work for you...

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TOP1 + THE POSTCODE OF YOUR LOCAL DEALER (EG. TOP1+TN4 0PA) TO 87474

OR VISIT

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PLAYBACK

→ **Software highlights** **IRON MAN 2** Even better than the first **PREDATORS** The alien safari park with human quarry **ALIEN ANTHOLOGY** An awesome edition with more extras than you could ever dream of **MOULIN ROUGE!** Perfect Blu-ray fodder **THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW** At last, the cult show on BD **AND MUCH MORE!**

The bitch is back!

20th Century Fox → All-region BD

Old zipper teeth returns and your home cinema library is incomplete without this BD boxset. Check out our in-depth review on page 100

HCC Ratings key

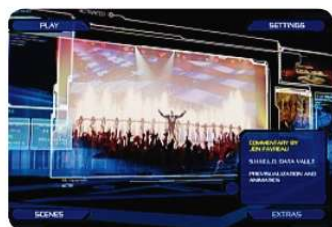
Goldfinger	1	2	3	4	5
Freddie Mercury	1	2	3	4	5
Silver Surfer	1	2	3	4	5
David Copperfield	1	2	3	4	5
Rin Tin Tin	1	2	3	4	5

The new pit-crew uniforms didn't suit everyone



Stark, raving mad

Robert Downey Jr turns in a sublime performance as the peacenik with the alter ego



HCC VERDICT

Iron Man 2 → Paramount → All-region BD (US import) → £22 Approx (www.movietyme.com)

We say: Easily one of the best Blu-rays we've seen all year

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Iron Man 2 is the very definition of big-budget blockbuster moviemaking; this sequel takes everything that made the first such a smash, and ramps it all up to 11, while not forgetting to stimulate the brain as well as the eyes and ears. So, while the action and special effects are mind-blowing, it's the characterisation that really makes it all work. The narrative through-line about responsibility and consequences gives Downey Jr free rein to dazzle with an onscreen chemistry with his co-stars that's, sadly, all too rare in most Hollywood blockbusters.

Chris Jenkins on picture: When *Iron Man* exploded onto Blu-ray back in 2008 it quickly established itself as a benchmark title for the format. And while the sequel doesn't feel quite as fresh, it easily lives up to its predecessor on picture quality.

While there are a handful of slightly soft shots that hardcore tech-heads will undoubtedly bemoan, on the whole this is an immaculate AVC 2.40:1 1080p presentation full of staggering amounts of shadow detail in even the darkest scenes. And when the action hits daylight (such as the Monaco showdown with Whiplash in Chapter 6) it'll hit you like a blow from a repulsor ray with its vibrant palette, incredible clarity and superb black levels.

Mark Craven on sound: If you're looking for a soundtrack that'll really show off your audio system, then they don't

come much better than *Iron Man 2*'s DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix. Right from the get-go this is an extremely aggressive mix that's not afraid to surround you with spatial effects and room-shaking bass. Iron Man's flight to the Stark Expo in Chapter 2, accompanied by fireworks exploding and AC/DC blasting away on the soundtrack, is the kind of thing that will have neighbours up in arms, while the racetrack confrontation with Whiplash in Chapter 6 will have them thinking that the apocalypse is here. And yet what impresses the most is the clarity and precision of the sonics on offer – it's all so controlled and pitch-perfect that it's sure to become your *de facto* Blu-ray audio demo disc.

Anton van Beek on extras: *Iron Man 2* certainly doesn't skimp on supplementary goodies. Joining the film on Disc One is an enthusiastic audio commentary by director Jon Favreau; a SHIELD Data Vault that enables viewers to watch the film with onscreen character profiles; data files and tech specs; a visit to The Vault itself (which holds the same info, plus a whole lot more about the interlinked Marvel movies), and

finally, a P-in-P Previsualisation and Animatics mode. A second Blu-ray disc houses the 87min, four-part *Ultimate Iron Man: Making Iron Man 2* documentary, while the final disc in the set is a DVD containing the film plus a Digital Copy to watch on portable media.



Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

Walt Disney → All-region BD
£24 Approx



Jake Gyllenhaal stars as the titular Prince, who's forced to flee when he's accused

of killing his adopted father in this disappointing videogame adaptation. He's joined by a surly Gemma Arterton and a magical dagger that can turn back time. The story is obvious, the action forgettable and you start to wonder why the ancient Persians all looked Caucasian! But for all its flaws, *PoP* looks mind-blowing in HD thanks to an excellent AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode, and the dynamic DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio is no slouch either. Comes with a bonus DVD copy. **AvB**.

1 2 3 4 5

Bad Lieutenant

Lionsgate → Region B BD
£25 Approx



Loosely based on the film of the same name by Abel Ferrara, Werner Herzog's effort shifts

the action to a post-Katrina New Orleans and casts Nicolas Cage as a pill-dependent cop, who is in love with a prostitute and in big trouble with his bookie. It's a darkly comedic piece of cinema, and while it never hits the same lows as the unflinching original, this remake is well worth the time. The AVC 1.85:1 1080p visuals suit the tone of the film well, but they are eclipsed by a brilliantly nuanced and effective DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix. Extras include six interviews and a Making of... doc. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

Cop Out

Warner Home Video → All-region BD
£23 Approx



Bruce Willis and Tracy Morgan star as a pair of NYPD officers on the trail of a stolen baseball card, which

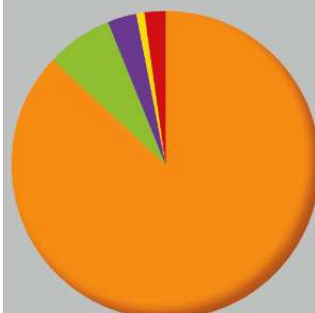
ends up pitting them against a drug dealer. As for its AV credentials, the Blu-ray's VC-1 2.40:1 is detailed, but suffers from some obvious artefacting, while the surprisingly subdued DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix is never as aggressive as you'd expect. What saves the disc, though, is the *Maximum Comedy Mode*. Running a whopping 175mins, this version of the film features plenty of input from director Kevin Smith (both onscreen and as a commentator) and is packed with bonus footage. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

We asked you...

Which is the best Predator film?

Predator: **87%**
 Predator 2: **7%**
 AVP: Alien vs Predator: **3%**
 AVP: Aliens vs Predator – Requiem: **1%**
 Predators: **2%**



Results of poll from
www.homecinemachoice.com

It shouldn't happen to a vet

'Kill or be killed' is the name of the game on the planet where humans are the prey

Predators was designed to be the sequel that Arnold Schwarzenegger's 1987 hit has always 'deserved', according to producer Robert Rodriguez. What he and director Nimrod Antal have delivered is effectively a reworking of the original, with a selection of trained killers finding themselves kidnapped and taken to a strange jungle where they're hunted by invisible creatures. That said, despite lacking much in the way of original story ideas, *Predators* is a perfectly enjoyable piece of disposable cinema, with decent performances, good FX and plenty of violence.

Chris Jenkins: *Predators* comes to Blu-ray with the kind of hi-def visual treatment you'd expect from a medium-budget Hollywood hit. Presented in its original 2.40:1 aspect ratio with a film-like AVC 1080p encode, the disc boasts some impressive detailing, impossibly deep blacks and strong colour reproduction. And even if it never quite makes it to the upper echelon of hi-def encodes, it also doesn't fall into some of the more common traps. Even tricky material such as the opening shot of Chapter 19, which has a red flare as the only light source in the smoke-filled tunnel, is entirely free from banding and digital artefacts.

Mark Craven: Even if *Predators*' DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 mix isn't up there with the very best you'll hear, it's still a thoroughly commendable effort. From something as simple as each whisper of 'Over here' coming from a different speaker in the soundfield during Chapter 14, to the more bombastic excess of Chapter 8 with the Predator hunting 'dogs' tearing through the forest as bullets fly all around you, this is an exquisitely nuanced mix that keeps you at the heart of the action.



Anton van Beek: Stacking shop shelves as one of Fox's Triple Play releases, the *Predators* Blu-ray ships with a bonus DVD and Digital Copy, plus a rather middling collection of bonus features. Director Nimrod Antal and producer Robert Rodriguez provide the obligatory chat track, which spends almost as much time on the film's production history as it does on any screen-specific analysis of the finished film. Following this are five *Motion Comics* (worth a look, but I doubt you'll go back to any of them a second time), six short behind-the-scenes featurettes exploring different aspects of the production (locations, characters, Predator design, etc.), a rather pointless character profile video entitled *The Chosen*, a short Fox Movie Channel look at the making of the 'Predator dog' scene (the only extra not in 1080p), nine deleted/extended scenes and a BD-Live link.



HCC VERDICT

Predators: Triple-Play Edition
→ Region A/B BD → £25 Approx

We say: A perfectly adequate thrill ride of a film

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

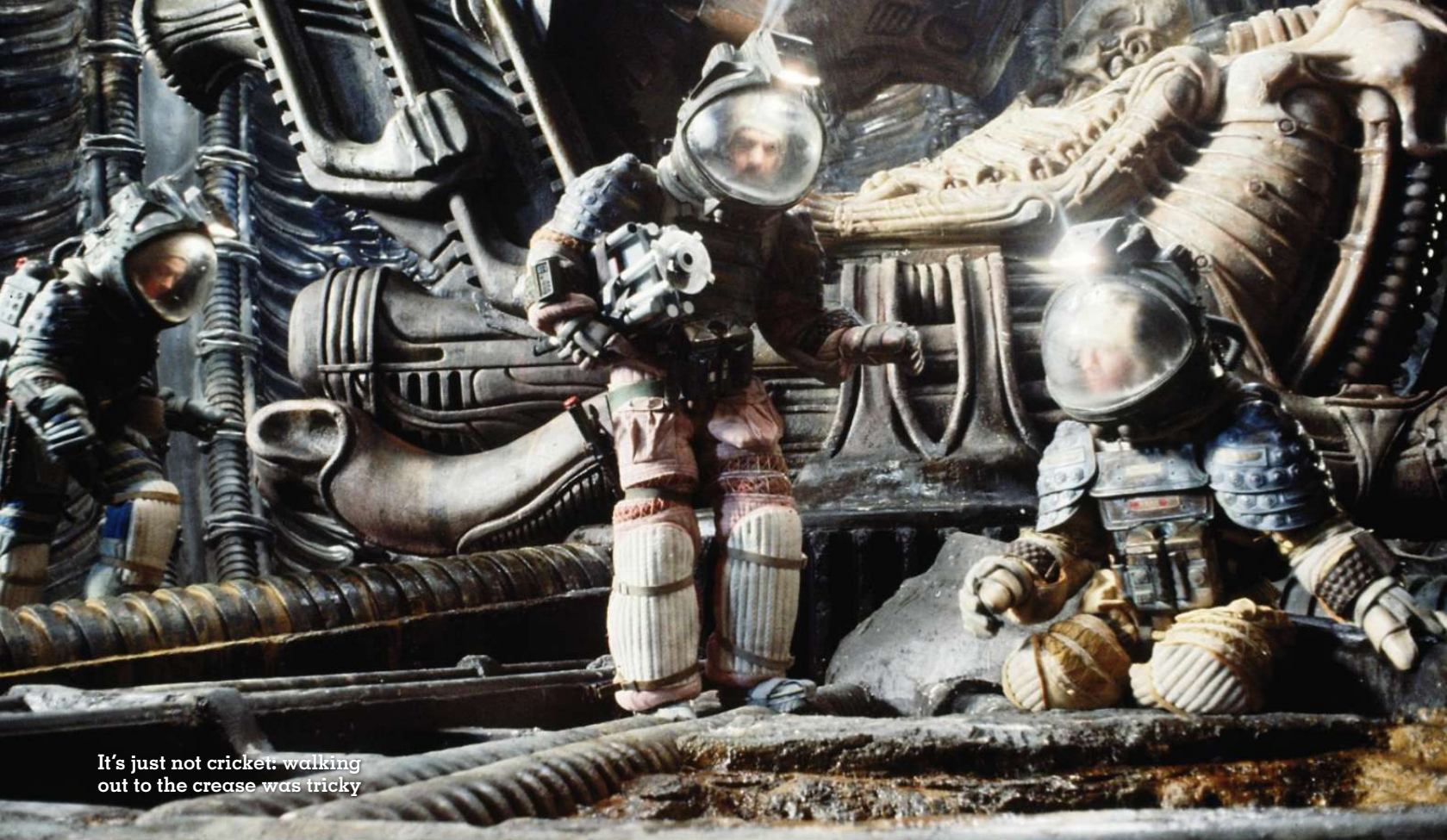
Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

>



It's just not cricket: walking out to the crease was tricky

Best boxset ever!

Four movies and more extras than you can shake a stick at



Alien Anthology is quite simply a must-have for any self-respecting home cinema buff. Not only do you get two *bona fide* Five Star classics – Ridley Scott's *Alien* and James Cameron's *Aliens* – but it also includes David Fincher's horribly underrated *Alien3* and Jean-Pierre Jeunet's half-baked *Alien Resurrection*. Okay, so the latter can't compare to the first three films in this legendary sci-fi/horror series, but taken as a whole, the *Alien* saga remains one of the most exciting, fascinating and enduring genre franchises ever made.

Chris Jenkins: Despite a couple of minor caveats, I feel confident in saying that fans of the films are going to be absolutely delighted with the four AVC 1080p encodes served up by this Blu-ray boxset. *Alien* gets the ball rolling with a frankly stunning 2.40:1 presentation that is packed full of fine detailing and deep blacks that give the corridors of the Nostromo a truly three-dimensional sense of depth. From the stark white of the hyper-sleep chamber in Chapter 3 to the interior of the derelict housing the calcified 'space jockey' in Chapter 11, every frame of the film looks immaculate and retains a wholly filmic look thanks to the decision to keep the inherent grain and not resort to noise reduction to smooth it out.

But the biggest surprise the set has to offer is *Aliens*' remastered 1.85:1 encode. Cameron has gone on record several times about his unhappiness surrounding the new high-speed



negative used during filming, which resulted in an excessively grainy look to the picture. Well, the remastered encode is a thing of incredible beauty, where some kind of noise reduction technology has been used to clean the image, but not at the expense of fine textures and shadow detail. It's

a remarkable piece of restoration that wholly deserves the plaudits that it will undoubtedly pick up around the world.

If *Alien3* and *Alien Resurrection* (both presented at 2.40:1) don't quite sparkle in the same way, it's probably down to the fact that both have been taken from older HD masters prepared a few years ago, rather than completely redone for this Blu-ray release. That said, the Blu-ray of *Alien3* is a complete revelation, coping so much better with the grungy brown and ochre palette of the film and its dank and smoky corridors than any previous DVD ever did. As for the last film in the series, this too is a huge improvement on previous versions, with J-P Jeunet's signature thick grainy texture evident throughout. However, as per previous home versions, it doesn't accurately reflect the CCE silver retention process used for the theatrical prints.

Mark Craven: All four films in the set have been graced with lossless DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 mixes, with the theatrical cuts of *Alien* and *Aliens* also featuring lossy Dolby Surround 4.1 tracks that reflect how the sound mixes for those particular films would have sounded originally. To be honest



Crew cut: Ripley gets mean

though, these lossless 5.1 mixes are so sympathetic to the source material, that there's really little point in bothering with the lossy tracks. Some might have expected Cameron's film at least to offer some audio bombast, but like Ridley Scott's original, it reflects the source material and remains heavily anchored to the front of the soundstage. Even sequences you'd expect to explode into life, such as the attack in the Alien Nest in Chapter 22 exhibits excellent L/C/R steering, but rarely strays beyond that for anything other than subtle atmospheric effects and extending the stage for James Horner's militaristic score. The first two films do pack some pretty mighty bass though; with the low rumbles accompanying the Nostromo's decent to Acheron in Chapter 7 of *Alien* happily rattling your bones.

Where the new lossless mixes for these films excel is in the clarity, detailing and precision they bring to the dialogue, Foley and scores. The audio steps up a number of gears with *Alien3*. This is a much more expansive soundtrack that makes great use of the surrounds – particularly during big chase through the prison tunnels that runs from Chapter 37 to 40. The entire soundstage is also used to great effect by Elliot Goldenthal's experimental score, a beguilingly odd mix of orchestra, hymns and atonal sounds. And if all of that wasn't enough, the production team actually got some of the cast back in to re-record some of their dialogue for the extended scenes ensuring that they're now completely audible and tonally matched with the rest of the mix. *Alien Resurrection* naturally feels the most like a modern blockbuster. Positional audio and big bass abounds in the mix, with even FATHER's voice echoing around the rears during the evacuation scenes sounding convincing enough to draw you into the heart of the action.

Anton van Beek: This six disc set serves up more than 60 hours of supplementary material. Suffice to say that pretty much everything from the *Alien Quadrilogy* boxset is here, from the alternate versions of the four films to the audio commentaries and documentaries. But the *Alien Anthology* Blu-rays have plenty of new treats to entice fans with as well. All four films now feature Dolby Digital 5.1 isolated scores for the theatrical cuts (the first two films also get a DD5.1 'Composer's Original Isolated Score' as well), and you also get an interactive feature called *MU-TH-UR Mode* that works similarly to the



HCC VERDICT

Alien Anthology
20th Century Fox
All-region BD → £50 Approx

We say: Blu-ray player owners simply must buy this boxset

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

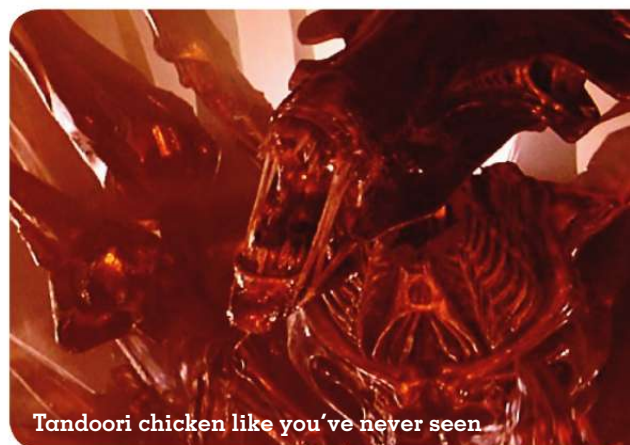
Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

The leisure centre pool attracted all sorts



Tandoori chicken like you've never seen

interactive material found on the *Gladiator* Blu-ray. While watching the film you can check out trivia pop-ups or find specific topics in the commentary, but beyond this you can also tag interesting items from a list of screen-specific supplementary material. This data is then stored and when you move onto the two bonus discs, instead of wading through everything, you can instead choose to simply play the material that you expressed an interest in while watching the films. Nifty.

Speaking of bonus discs, the fifth disc in the set houses the four epic documentaries about the making of the movies produced for the *Alien Quadrilogy* DVD boxset. But even here things have been improved significantly. Not only does the Blu-ray feature the full-length version of *Wreckage and Rage: The Making of Alien3* (Fox insisted on just over 21mins of cuts to the DVD release, fearing it put the studio in a bad light) that's packed with previously unseen behind-the-scenes footage of Fincher on set, but it also adds 25+ *Enhancement Pods* to each of the documentaries. These are essentially extra interview pieces that presumably didn't fit the final cuts of the documentaries, but which are now available to view by activating the disc's *MU-TH-UR Mode* or from a separate menu.

All of that would have been enough to guarantee the set five stars for extras, but there's also a sixth disc. Sadly, for some reason Fox refused to make this final disc available for review, but it promises plenty more fascinating goodies including, screen tests, additional deleted scenes, multi-angle scene deconstructions, art galleries, screenplay drafts, archival promo featurettes, trailers, TV spots and much, much more.

Don't dream it, see it

Creatures of the night, young and old, tap your toes to the tunes...

The Rocky Horror Picture Show

is undoubtedly the definitive cult movie. Now 35 years old, this film adaptation of Richard O'Brien's stage musical is more popular than ever, continuing to do big business with its loyal fanbase, as it plays at midnight screenings across the US and UK. And it's a marvellously madcap piece of cinema, packed with outrageous performances, big laughs and catchy songs that stick in your head forever.

Chris Jenkins: I've had the pleasure of seeing *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* on a variety of different formats – from DVD and VHS through LaserDisc, TV broadcasts and cinema screenings – and this Blu-ray release trumps them all by a considerable distance when it comes to picture quality. While the film's visual style is rarely as extravagant as its cast of characters, this beautifully restored AVC 1.66:1 1080p encode certainly knows how to bring the very best out of the images. Fine details, textures and film grain are all present and correct, but it's the colour saturation that really impresses, as exemplified by the vibrancy of Columbia's gold-sequined top hat and tails in her introduction during the *Time Warp* in Chapter 7.

Mark Craven: The Blu-ray's DTS-HD Master Audio 7.1 mix is definitely an improvement on the old DD5.1 remix that appeared on the DVD release. The musical numbers are now far more balanced, with volume levels for the lyrics and instruments being much better matched. That said, the limitation of the original audio elements mean that, outside of the musical numbers, *Rocky*

Horror... remains a very front-heavy affair, with some movement across the L/C/R spread, but little beyond that. For purists, the disc also includes a lossy Dolby Digital 2.0 presentation of the original mono mix as well.

Anton van Beek: *Rocky Horror...* comes to Blu-ray with a cornucopia of bonus features that still left this fan slightly disappointed. Most of the extras from the DVD are present. However, the big addition is the inclusion of a picture-in-picture 'Shadowcast' presentation with an accompanying two-part doc about the audition process. But is it too much to ask for a proper feature-length doc about the making of the film?



HCC VERDICT

The Rocky Horror Picture Show → 20th Century Fox → All-region BD
£20 Approx

We say: Give in to the pleasure

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet

20th Century Fox → All-region BD
£20 Approx



The film that made Shakespeare cool again makes the jump to Blu-ray, and like its Red Curtain trilogy stablemate *Moulin Rouge!* it greatly benefits from the added image and audio quality. The frantic and exuberant visuals look simply divine thanks to a retina-searing AVC 2.40:1080p encode, while the music-driven DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix bursts forth with excellent dynamic range and inventive use of the full soundfield. Among the many, many extras are a new Picture-in-Picture mode. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

Mother

Optimum → Region B BD → £23
Approx



Korean director Bong Joon-ho has now created this fascinating melodrama about a mother (Kim Hye-Ja) trying to prove her son's innocence in the murder of a young girl. Shocking and complex, *Mother* is another triumph confirming him as one of the least predictable and most interesting filmmakers in the world. This Blu-ray does the film full justice with an excellent AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode, and if the DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio doesn't rate quite as highly, it's down to the nature of the film itself. Extras include an excellent Making of..., interviews and the trailer. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Memento

Pathé → Region B BD
£20 Approx



Christopher Nolan's small scale thriller is for our money his most satisfying film to date. Beginning at the end and working through its story in reverse chronological order, *Memento* has lost none of its power to enthrall audiences through repeat viewings. For its UK Blu-ray debut, the movie delivers a generally sound AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode that can look a bit flat, but unleashes plenty of fine detail in close-ups. The DTS-HD MA 5.1 is more atmospheric than dynamic and dialogue is clear, if a little bass-heavy at times. Plentiful extras include a commentary and interviews. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

The Disappearance of Alice Creed

Zentertain Ltd → Region R2 DVD
£20 Approx



Actress *de jour* Gemma Arterton takes the title role in this supremely confident crime thriller. To say too much risks spoiling the plot's many twists and turns; suffice to say that three actors in a couple of rooms make for as gripping a thriller as anything that Hollywood has delivered recently. But it's not really a hi-def showcase. The AVC 2.40:1 1080p visuals look very natural and reasonably detailed, but there are some obvious banding and artefacts in some shots. The DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio also offers little above the LPCM 2.0 mix. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

Chuck: Season 3Warner Home Video → R2 DVD
£40 Approx

With Intersect 2.0 now housed in his head, Chuck finally realises his dream of becoming a secret

agent and hopes to get closer to fellow agent Sarah Walker in this third season of the US cult show. But he soon has to deal with more of his friends and family knowing his secret, plus a rival for Sarah's affections in the form of CIA Agent Daniel Shaw (Brandon Routh). As per previous sets, this four-disc DVD release offers pleasing anamorphic 1.78:1 transfers and the DD5.1 audio is well rounded, while extras (deleted scenes, two featurettes and a gag reel) are as slim as ever. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Lost: The Final SeasonWalt Disney → All-region BD
£60 Approx

Having set up so many mysteries over the previous five years, and then adding a whole new 'flash sideways', it's a miracle that *Lost*'s writers could create any sort of cohesive ending. But they did and while it doesn't answer everything, the characters do get the emotionally satisfying send-off they deserve. As per previous Blu-rays, this five-disc set serves up spectacular AVC 1.78:1 1080p encodes accompanied by extremely dynamic DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtracks. Extras include an exclusive epilogue *The Man in Charge* and more. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Heroes: Season 4Universal Pictures → All-region BD
£55 Approx

Despite claims that this fourth season would return *Heroes* to its glory days, the meandering subplots,

lead dialogue and glacial pacing only served to hasten its demise. The VC-1 1.78:1 1080p imagery remains as inconsistent as ever, with brilliantly delineated shots sitting next to oddly dull and murky imagery. At least the DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio packs a little more punch, even if it does so at the cost of burying the dialogue. Copious extras include deleted/extended scenes, featurettes, seven behind-the-scenes vignettes and PiP U-Control functions. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

Fanboys

Anchor Bay → Region B BD → £20 Approx



The ultimate *Star Wars* love letter, this movie follows four childhood buddies as they hit the road in

1998, in order to break into Skywalker Ranch and see *The Phantom Menace* months before it hits cinemas. Along the way they run foul of Trekkies (led by Seth Rogen), a crazy pimp (Rogen, again) and the police. This low-budget comedy acquits itself fairly well in the Blu-ray stakes. The AVC 1.78:1 1080p imagery is reasonably detailed and saturated, while the DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio bristles with authentic *Star Wars* sound effects. Seven webisodes and a trailer are included in the package. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Roll up for Spectacular Spectacular!

This colourful extravaganza is a perfect showcase for high-definition visuals and audio



Windmills of your mind...on acid

Moulin Rouge! is the pinnacle of Baz Luhrmann's cinema of excess. Described by the filmmaker himself as 'belonging to a vernacular where you are essentially heightening the cinematic experience', this bold, brash and electrifying attempt at recreating the movie musical for a modern audience offers little original in the way of narrative. But the way it is designed, staged and filmed, not to mention the inventive use of pop songs throughout, makes it unique – and we wouldn't have it any other way.

Chris Jenkins: In one of the new featurettes on this Blu-ray, director Baz Luhrmann explains that he and colourist Jan Yarbrough spent months re-timing the film's visuals in order to 'take the film that you experienced in the cinema and transfer it to Blu-ray, but enhance and celebrate the visual philosophy that we arrived at in trying to reinvent the movie musical'. What this boils down to is a sensational AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode that wows from the get-go. The upgrade in clarity, fine detailing and,



most notably, colour saturation is evident in every shot and is so far beyond what the DVD achieved, it truly is spectacular.

Mark Craven: This movie comes to BD with a sparkling diamond of a DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 mix that is every bit as opulent and satisfying as the disc's visuals. From the moment Christian and his bohemian companions are sucked into the Moulin Rouge in Chapter 4, the entire soundfield bursts into life. Unsurprisingly, it's the musical numbers that showcase what it's capable of with rich, layered vocals, accurate tonality of the instruments and surprisingly deep bass.

Anton van Beek: Luhrmann and his team have pulled out all of the stops for this BD. The picture-in-picture mode assaults the senses with a cavalcade of behind-the-scenes footage, concept art, pop-up trivia, audio commentary, and even branching links to alternate edits and other treats from the Bazmark Vaults. There's also a short intro, a plethora of new featurettes and more.

**HCC VERDICT**

Moulin Rouge! → 20th Century
Fox → All-region
BD → £20 Approx

We say: We'll love this disc 'until our dying day'

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



HDMI over single co-axial cable!

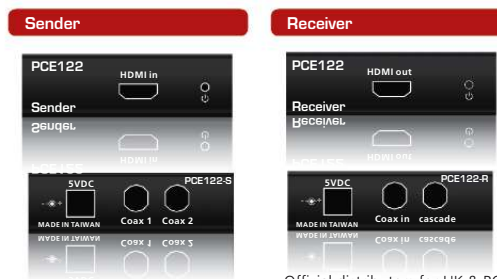
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Marine life: but where are the
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More gung-ho than 'Bali Hai'

Take cover as the DTS-HD soundtrack brings the theatre of war into your viewing room

The Pacific is a companion piece to the earlier Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks produced *Band of Brothers*. This 10-part miniseries shifts its gaze from Europe to the war in the Pacific, and follows three marines rather than a single company of soldiers.

Unflinching in its depiction of war and its effects on soldiers, compared to its acclaimed predecessor, *The Pacific* suffers from haphazard pacing that probably does a fine job of reflecting the nature of the combat, but which doesn't necessarily make it easy to follow. But even with its handful of flaws, this series remains a majestic and engrossing slice of TV drama.

Chris Jenkins: This \$230m miniseries looks nothing less than sensational on Blu-ray, with an AVC 1.78:1 1080p encode that blows many of the mega-budget Hollywood blockbusters I've seen in hi-def out of the water.

The picture is insanely detailed; with every pore and wrinkle in the troops' faces, and every scratch and chip in their helmets, clear for all to see. When the action pauses and the smoke lifts, you get to appreciate how impressive the colour repro is, with bright blue skies and lush green vegetation seducing your eyes. But even when the visuals are pushed to their limit – such as the night fight on Guadalcanal in Part 2 Chapter 5 – they still hold together extremely well. Blacks are deep enough to lose yourself in, yet the perfect contrast ensures that detail isn't obliterated and you never lose track of what's happening.

Mark Craven: *The Pacific's* DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtrack is even better than its image quality, and the mix really explodes into life during the battle scenes – such as the Peleliu beach landing in Part 5 Chapters 4-5 and subsequent airfield assault in Part 6 Chapters 3-4. There's real precision in the placement and quality of the audio during even the most chaotic gunfight, and there's no flabby bass here, just tight, impactful low frequency effects accompanying every onscreen explosion. Use of the surrounds is simply spectacular, with tracer fire flying all around the soundstage, but always under tight control, while superb panning effects mean that you can follow the path of the Japanese planes flying overhead.

Anton van Beek: The extra features in this set follow the same pattern as those on the *Band of Brothers* release. The first five discs (each containing two episodes) all offer short *Historical Background* intros that provide some context for the following episode, a Picture-in-Picture *Enhanced Viewing Mode* featuring interviews with veterans and historians, plus archival footage and maps, and an interactive *Field Guide*. The latter presents key events from each episode on a timeline and allows you to access additional interviews and archival materials related to them.

The sixth disc is entirely devoted to extras. Here you'll find six *Profiles of The Pacific* (short interviews with veterans and their families), the 23-min *Making of The Pacific* featurette and the 10-min *Anatomy of the Pacific War* featurette.



HCC VERDICT

The Pacific → HBO Home Entertainment →
All-region BD
£50 Approx

We say: While not quite as good as *Band of Brothers*, *The Pacific* is still a breathtaking hi-def AV experience

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

The Human Centipede [First Sequence]

Bounty Films → Region B BD
£20 Approx



Director Tom Six's middling slice of over-cooked body horror gained notoriety from its stomach-churning concept; a crazy doctor stitches three people together mouth-to-anus to create a 'human centipede'. Thankfully, given the impressively detailed nature of the AVC 1.88:1 1080:50 encode, a lot of the nastiness occurs off-screen, but there's enough to test your gag reflex. The DTS-HD MA 2.0 audio is faithful to the source material and there's a very generous bunch of extras in HD. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

The Evil Dead

Sony Pictures → All-region BD → £18 Approx



This new Blu-ray debut for the film is a must-see for fans. The AVC 1.85:1 1080p encode is highly impressive and captures the rough-hewn texture of the film stock perfectly, while delivering plenty of fine detail. The DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix also does wonders for the film's inventive audio. Fun extras include a new commentary; a 54min *Making of...* doc; a PIP track with other genre filmmakers discussing the film's impact and influence; raw footage and more. Only the lack of the original 1.33:1 framing and the omission of extras from previous DVDs hold this disc back from a five star rating. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Frozen

Momentum Pictures → All-region BD
£20 Approx



Hatchet director Adam Green delivers an altogether more chilling slice of horror with this ruthlessly efficient tale of three skiers stranded on a chairlift in sub-zero temperatures and faced with little prospect of being rescued as the resort doesn't re-open for another five days. While the film itself is a belter, its modest budget and the tricky conditions endured during the shoot mean that the drab, but fairly detailed, VC-1 2.40:1 1080p encode isn't exactly at the cutting edge of HD imagery. Likewise, the DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio is similarly limited. There's a generous bunch of extras, though. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Possession

Second Sight → R2 DVD
£20 Approx



Parts art movie, part body horror, this film got caught up in the Video Nasties furor. Finally available legitimately and uncut, the utterly bonkers story stars Sam Neill and Isabelle Adjani as a married couple whose relationship has become little more than a series of violent arguments and fights. Things get freaky when it turns out that Adjani's character is involved in an affair with a strange squid-like creature. The anamorphic 1.66:1 transfer captures the film's stark visuals very well, while the dual-mono audio is cleanly rendered. Extras include a fascinating *Making of...* **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

The devil is in the (HD) detail

Transferred to Blu-ray with mixed results, the seminal exorcism horror movie will have you reaching for your crucifix all over again. Keep the faith...



Tasty: You'll never want to eat mushy peas again



HCC VERDICT

The Exorcist → Warner Home Video → All-region BD → £20 Approx

We say: The power of Christ compels you to add this impressive Blu-ray release to your collection

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

The Exorcist is a film that surely needs little introduction. One of the most celebrated horror films of all-time, this tale of a young girl possessed by demonic forces still has the power to shock audiences despite the number of times it has been referenced and parodied by other movies across the better part of three decades.

Chris Jenkins: The two cuts of *The Exorcist* arrive on Blu-ray with a pair of somewhat inconsistent VC-1 1.85:1 1080p encodes. Some shots, such as the early scenes in Iraq, look spectacular – exactly what we've come to expect from Warner's restorations of its back catalogue big hitters – while others are surprisingly soft and excessively grainy. However, much of this may be down to the issues with the source material regarding filming conditions and optical effects. As such I can't really imagine it looking much better than it does here. Perhaps most crucially, though, is that William Friedkin has resisted the temptation to do a *French Connection* and completely screw up the colour timing.

Mark Craven: Neither version is going to push your speaker setup to its limits with their DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 mixes. Despite the surround sound remixes, the film (in both incarnations) remains a predominantly front-heavy affair with a good stereo spread, but little use is made of the rears beyond ambient effects (such as the French dresser moving across the room towards Regan's mother in Chapter 29, with the audio expanding from the front to the rear of the sound stage in a complimentary manner). Where the mixes do score highly is with the beautifully textured nature of the dialogue, music and Foley effects, which

Some kids do anything to stay off school



moved Friedkin to claim: 'I've heard little details in the soundtrack of the Blu-ray that I'd never heard, that I didn't even know were in the track' in one of the new extras.

Anton van Beek: This two-disc set serves up a fantastic platter of content for fans of this horror classic. The first disc contains the 122min Theatrical Version of the film alongside two commentary tracks, a reel of sketches and storyboard art, three short interviews with William Friedkin and William Peter Blatty, the original ending, three trailers, four TV spots and the full-length 77min cut of the excellent *Fear of God* documentary (which had previously been hacked down to 53mins for all UK DVD releases).

Alongside the 132min Extended Director's Cut on Disc Two, you'll find a fantastic 30min *Making of...* packed with archival on-set footage.

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Feedback

Got an axe to grind? Want to comment on current technology? Need to share? **HCC** is here to help

Archiving R.I.P.?

Both Mark Renton's letter on archiving of off-air recordings, and your reply to it in *HCC* #187, seem to miss the point(s).

First, these days almost all broadcast material that is actually worth watching more than once is also repeated *ad infinitum*, so anything more than temporary timeshifting is more likely to be compulsive hoarding than useful library building. Permanent retention is also rarely, if ever legal, however low the chance of litigation, so expecting companies to add features dedicated to it is a bit much.

Second, I suspect that such archiving will soon become impossible anyway. Digital broadcasts can be tagged to restrict digital copying. Analogue broadcast is rapidly being switched off. Analogue video outs are scheduled to disappear from new AV kit; my TV already suppresses them when playing back digital sources, copy protected or not. Some Blu-ray discs are flagged to either limit analogue video to SD, or suppress it altogether.

Of course broadcasters have 'no plans' to globally turn on copy and/or ad-skip prevention, but you know they'll do it the day it becomes worth their while to do so. Why else invest in internet streaming, a complex and bandwidth-heavy approach to 'watch again', when timeshifting off-air is simpler, cheaper, and higher quality, unless you're planning to turn the latter off in the future?
Dave Lockwood, Warwick

Thanks Dave. We agree that IPTV looks set to overtake regular timeshifting at some point in the future. As for archiving becoming

impossible, we wouldn't go that far – although it may be that PC-based systems take up the slack if home entertainment brands do away with it.

I want cinema sound

I am about to buy a flatscreen TV and realise that good sound is best achieved by getting a surround sound system.

Can you please advise me if you feel it's worth considering the TV brand names' (Samsung/Panasonic/Sony etc) own surround sound systems

– or do you feel that they would

Sound purchase:

Systems from TV brands are often less powerful than specialist AV kit



probably always offer inferior sound quality against getting one of the 'specialist' sound systems – e.g. from KEF/QAcoustics/Wharfedale/Denon, etc.

Pam Keningale, via email

Firstly, you're right to be looking at surround sound

systems, as many people often find that the audio that accompanies the images on their new flatscreen TV leaves something to be desired.

There is, of course, a temptation to buy a sound system from your TV manufacturer, especially if it's part of a money-saving deal,



Who cares about film grain?

Can you tell me what the fascination is with film grain on Blu-rays? I'd rather they removed it (as long as this did not effect picture quality).

I bought into HD because I wanted the best picture available. Some discs are outstanding with regards to picture quality, but there are others discs when film grain can become distracting (some even add grain, like 300!).

I don't buy CDs to hear tape hiss, and I wonder what the reaction would be if record companies decided to add hiss to give music that authentic feel.

There must be a way of removing grain and let the beauty of film shine through.
Paul Kelly, via email

The Beek replies: I think we can all agree that we buy Blu-rays to see the films they contain, but the real

argument here is what you actually want from the format. The beauty of BD is that it can more accurately reflect the overall look of a film better than any other home entertainment format. Now, a large part of that is the format's ability to accurately reflect every aspect of how a film originally looked right down to the film grain – it was present in the original footage, it's present in the prints made for cinema distribution and it's arguably how the relevant films should look on Blu-ray to completely replicate the true cinema experience in our homes. Digital grain is another issue altogether, and

is an aesthetic choice by a filmmaker (as has been the use of some grainy film stocks over the decades) and if it's how they want the film to look, then it's how it should be seen.

Digital noise reduction technology (DNR) is used to some degree in every Blu-ray encode, and when pushed far enough it can be used to eliminate grain. But, as was recently seen in the *Predator* re-release, this has the



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but often these systems are relatively low-powered compared to those from specialist brands. Of course, it may be that you don't need or want a more highly-powered system – if your living room is quite small, for instance.

A 'specialist' system will usually deliver better sound quality, but can cost more and involve matching an amplifier to a set of speakers, although packages such as Denon's DHT-1311XP and Onkyo's HT-S3305 (see page 54) do the latter job for you.

downside of introducing artefacts and smearing, and eliminating fine detail as well as the intrinsic film grain that you happen to dislike. However, as shown by the release of *Aliens* (reviewed on p100) it seems that it is possible to lessen the amount of grain in an image without altering the look of the film, stripping out fine detail and introducing technical flaws. We've no idea how much time was spent doing it, though, or how much it cost 20th Century Fox.

Winner: Star Letter writer wins copies of *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* and *Moulie Rougel*, courtesy of 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment. They're both available to buy from 1 November priced £20 approx.

3D is a gimmick!

I have been watching the debate about the role of 3D in home cinema with interest for some while now, and have to admit, I'm a bit perplexed.

To watch 3D at home you now have to replace your TV or projector, or both, your Blu-ray player, and probably your AVR. It's a helluva lot of outlay for what I see as a gimmick.

I'm a AV enthusiast because I love films. To see them in 3D may well be more involving, but can it be justified considering the expense? I would expect most film enthusiasts would be glad to go to the cinema for this experience, but when buying a BD or DVD, the biggest selling point is surely how good the story is.

CGI can make a difference as can 3D, but can they make a bad film better? No! Let's leave 3D at the cinema and concentrate on watching damn good films that we want to see, at home in glorious HD! Steve Old, via email

Is 3D a gimmick? Possibly. Are all of the films currently available on 3D Blu-ray aimed mainly at kids? Yes. But does that mean we don't want 3D at home? No!

Cost no object

In response to Simon's Star Letter in HCC #186, I would like to say I fully endorse exorbitantly over-priced items being reviewed in *Home Cinema Choice*. I tend to buy (what I believe) is good quality kit – nothing like the esoterica of a Krell or Meridian you understand – but I simply cannot purchase items for my home cinema on a monthly basis.

For this reason I buy HCC each month as simple infotainment, and as such, I do not want to see it stuffed to the gills with bargain basement products. I want to be inspired by swanky installs, see what other enthusiasts have done to create a cinema in their sitting room, read about ridiculously priced and mid-end kit and follow Richard Stevenson's subwoofer dilemmas! Giles Manton, via email

Spex appeal

I recently bought a Panasonic 3DTV, Blu-ray player and two extra glasses for the kids.

The panel is outstanding, and 3D content is really quite remarkable, but there's a problem: the glasses are so badly designed it's quite incredible, and my kids can't watch anything for more than a few minutes. The glasses are too front-heavy, creating pressure on the nose that my kids just can't stand, even after trying the different nose pieces.

Also, the lenses are too narrow and thin, so that if you rest your head back at all you see under them. The sides are completely open, so too much light enters, showing constant flickering in anything but complete darkness.

So here's my question: how can a company like Panasonic ever let these glasses get to market? Surely there are trials or feedback groups? Surely they tested them on children? Whoever designed these ridiculous and uncomfortable glasses should be sacked, then shot (just in the leg, I am an AV nut, so naturally opposed to extreme violence) and then made to wear them constantly for at least one week.

Russell Hogan, Surrey

Panasonic's first wave of 3D glasses weren't great. You probably don't want to hear that it's now launching smaller pairs aimed at children...

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Home Cinema

...so good, you'll believe you're there?

Choosing a home cinema system is a potential minefield that must be negotiated with great care or safely avoided by letting experts guide you. If you want to end up with a system that, as a minimum, meets your expectations in terms of picture and sound quality, reading magazine product reviews and choosing the recommendations, five-star favourites or best buys can only ever be part of the answer at best. Looking for the cheapest price and having a system delivered to your door, even with a 'knowledgeable' friend to help set it up, is a well-trodden path to disappointment.

There is a bewildering choice of components on the market today and also different ways in which components can be installed and connected together. Which sort of visual system do you go for? Projector and screen, or plasma, LCD or LED TV? 3D or non-3D? Full 1080p capability is now the only sensible choice but the appropriate source components, such as a Blu-ray player, need to be part of the equation. The sound performance of a system is also hugely important, even more so if you will be listening to music, or music DVD's, through the same system. If so, you need an amp that approaches the performance of a decent 2-channel hi-fi amp, which is not that easy to find. Having an amp with the right inputs for the best connectivity is essential but you will also need to decide on a 5.1 or 7.1 speaker system, passive or active sub and, crucially, where they will be sited for the best results. In short, it's complicated and very fertile ground for getting it wrong.

Achieving potential

To select a system, you could choose a collection of 'Best Buy' components in the hope that they will be a great combination. Maybe, but probably not. You could buy a pre-packaged all-in-one system from one manufacturer. This is almost certainly not the best route either as you will miss out on enormous potential. From informal surveys conducted, it appears highly likely that the majority of home cinema systems selected



and installed on a DIY basis (that is without professional input) are performing at way below their optimum level. To compound matters, most are also ill-matched to the room in which they are installed and are, in reality, the wrong system. Without considerable knowledge or experience, high quality home cinema is not a suitable DIY activity.

Our aim must be to buy a home cinema system that will provide an excellent picture quality plus an audio delivery that will match, or even better, the commercial cinema experience. It must be exciting, reliable and deliver true value for money.

What and Where to buy

To ensure a home cinema system is right for you, where do you start? Here's an important tip ... **don't** start with **WHAT**, start with **WHERE**. There's only one way to give yourself the best

chance of getting it right first time, and that's through a specialist AV dealer. It's possible you have preconceived ideas that put you off visiting one. Although you would welcome the advice and guidance, you don't know the technical jargon. You don't want to be talked down to. Your friend has said they only sell expensive gear and they're not interested if you don't have a big budget. They're expensive. These are just myths.

Most specialist AV dealers are running their business because, above all, home cinema is their hobby. They spend a large portion of their time comparing systems to get the best possible results. They know the component combinations which don't gel together and, conversely, they know the combinations which give the best performance within a given price range. Very importantly, they know how to get a system working to its optimum. But they all also know the system must suit **you**.

“...the majority of home cinema systems selected and installed on a DIY basis (that is without professional input) are performing at way below their optimum level.”

Buying or being sold to?

There are dealers around, web based or otherwise, who will sell you anything you are willing to pay for. They may be a bit cheaper but that's all they offer. Now there's a carefully selected group of long-established specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer first. Their idea of 'selling' is to discuss your requirements, offer their advice, give you the best options, then play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge. You'll probably be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to see and hear the differences between components and between systems. You'll be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand in your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it performs to its best, and ensure you're entirely happy with the way it works. Why? Because a high proportion of these dealers' custom comes through people who have bought from them before, either directly or by recommendation. It's vital to them to get it right for you.

Getting the best deal

Unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years. Most of these dealers offer much longer equipment guarantees than provided by the manufacturer, a very worthwhile benefit, but it also makes it in the dealer's interest to ensure high build quality and reliability. Maybe you could save a few pounds by buying piecemeal but you'll lose out on the overall package. As far as the dealers are concerned, they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a far better way of doing business than just handing over boxes.

LISTED BELOW ARE 20 OF THE BEST AV SHOPS IN THE COUNTRY.

They have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards home cinema systems that will provide years of superlative performance and total satisfaction.

STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SERVICE	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
FACILITIES	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VERDICT	★ ★ ★ ★ ★



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www.rayleighhifi.co.uk

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33 Sir Isaac's Walk. 01206 577682
www.rayleighhifi.co.uk

Kingston-upon-Thames INFIDELITY

9 High Street, Hampton Wick.
020 8943 3530
www.infidelity.co.uk

Maidenhead AUDIO VENUE

36 Queen Street. 01628 633995
www.audiovenue.co.uk

Rayleigh, Essex RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION

44a High Street. 01268 779762
Custom Install Dept.
01268 776932
www.rayleighhifi.co.uk

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www.rayleighhifi.co.uk
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01892 535007
www.kenthomecinema.co.uk

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163 Spon Street. 024 7652 5200
www.frankharvey.co.uk

Nottingham CASTLE SOUND & VISION

48/50 Maid Marian Way. 0115 9584404
www.castlesoundvision.com

Solihull MUSIC MATTERS

93-95 Hobs Moat Road. 0121 742 0254
www.musicmatters.co.uk

NORTH

Chester ACOUSTICA

17 Hoole Road. 01244 344227
www.acoustica.co.uk

York SOUND ORGANISATION

2 Gillygate. 01904 627108
www.soundorg.co.uk

SCOTLAND

Aberdeen HOLBURN HI-FI

441 Holburn Street. 01224 585713/572729
www.holburnhifi.co.uk

Edinburgh LOUD & CLEAR

Bonnington Mill, 72 Newhaven Rd.
0131 555 3963
www.loud-clear.co.uk

Glasgow GLASGOW AUDIO

135 Great Western Road.
0141 332 2200/4707
www.glasgowaudio.com



The majority of the above dealers are members of one or both of the major trade organisations, BADA or CEDIA.

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01/10

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★★★★★
02/10

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Boston Acoustics Soundware 5.1

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
05/10

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Pack Price: £319.99

Jamo A102 5.1 Speaker Pack

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
08/10

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+ Onkyo TX-SR508 (& free cables worth £118)	£508.99	£309
+ Yamaha RX-V367 (& free cables worth £113)	£387.99	£275
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Pack Price: £209.00

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WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
08/10

	Bundle Price	Save
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46in → KDL-40EX503
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1 2 3 4 5

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Highs: Free HD channels on tap; value for money; 'net interactivity

Lows: CCFL backlight

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 181
For more info visit:
www.sony.co.uk



SONY
60in → KDL-60LX903
£3,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Flagship 3D set from Sony is a real bigscreen beauty

Highs: Integrated 3D; intuitive GUI; cinematic HD pictures

Lows: Weak audio; 2D-3D quality is source-dependent

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.sony.co.uk



SAMSUNG
40in → UE-40C7000
£1,800 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Debut 3DTV stands out in other areas, too

Highs: Next-gen tech; Freeview HD tuner; app store

Lows: Fiddly control system; 3D effect needs a bigger display

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Via HDMI only
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 180
For more info visit:
www.samsung.co.uk



LG
47in → 47LE8900
£2,100 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

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Lows: Limited web content

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 184
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SHARP
46in → LC-46LE821E
£2,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

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Highs: Amazing levels of fine detail; great colour fidelity; useful Time Shift function

Lows: No video streaming

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.sharp.co.uk

Also recommended...



LG
55in → 55LX9900
£3,700 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

LG's Active Shutter premium 3D screen benefits from its size

Highs: 2D and 3D pics have cinematic scale and punch; good calibration tools

Lows: Crosstalk; weak audio

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 2
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk



SAMSUNG
46in → LE46C750
£1,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

3D for all. Affordable active shutter set with CCFL backlight

Highs: Good 2D performance and effective 2D-3D conversion

Lows: Crosstalk problems and narrow viewing angle

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 187
For more info visit:
www.samsung.co.uk



LG
42in → 42SL9000
£1,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

LG's LED-lit 'Seamless' LCD offers excellent value for money

Highs: Exceptional pictures; ISF-certified calibrated controls

Lows: Black levels aren't A-list; 'Seamless' design isn't all that

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes

Tested: Issue 178
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk

Editor's Choice...

SAMSUNG
55in → UE55C9000
£7,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

The 55in Series 9 stands as the crowning glory of Samsung's TV design and technology divisions.

It's an extraordinary product, which warrants its lofty position in the range, and is a great example of just how accomplished an LCD can be – none of Samsung's rivals have a comparable 'statement' product. As a feature-packed set that offers such goodies as 3D, 2D-3D conversion, Internet@TV and media streaming, it represents the leading edge in functionality and the picture quality is exquisite. Once you've seen one in action, you'll want one.

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit: www.samsung.co.uk

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD



Plasma TV

Best on test...



PIONEER
60in → KRP-600A
£5,000 Approx



Kuro with separate media box, Ethernet and satellite tuner

Highs: Awesome black levels; colour accuracy; slim panel; media-savvy

Lows: Problems with AVI files

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 3 (2 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes and DVB-S2 tuner

Tested: Issue 164
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk



PANASONIC
65in → TX-P65VT20
£4,500 Approx



The biggest 3D TV currently available is worth the high ticket

Highs: High-impact bigscreen pictures; minimal crosstalk with 3D images

Lows: Sucks electricity

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD and Freesat HD

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



PANASONIC
46in → TX-P46Z1
£4,300 Approx



THX-certified, ultra thin PDP with wireless transmission

Highs: Stunning HD and SD pictures; gorgeous design; good features set

Lows: Premium price point

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes and Freesat HD

Tested: Issue 172
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



PANASONIC
50in → TX-P50G20
£1,500 Approx



Freeview HD and Freesat HD plasma is the FTA king

Highs: Performance; price; Freesat/Freeview HD tuners;

Lows: USB recording mode comes with strings attached

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD and Freesat HD

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk



LG
32in → 32PG6000
£500 Approx



World's smallest 32in plasma challenges LCD rivals

Highs: Smooth movement; good blacks and connectivity

Lows: Lack of detail; some jagged edges; average audio

→ Specifications

Full HD: No
1024 x 720 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes

Tested: Issue 162
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk

Also recommended...



LG
50in → 50PG6000
£1,100 Approx



Superb HD Ready plasma offering great value for money

Highs: Extensive calibration possibilities; excellent black level; sexy bezel

Lows: Not full HD

→ Specifications

Full HD: No
1366 x 768 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes

Tested: Issue 154
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk



PANASONIC
42in → TX-P42G15
£850 Approx



Freesat HD NeoPDP at an enticing price

Highs: Wide viewing angle; excellent HD pics

Lows: Lacks brightness; three HDMI only

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 3
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes and Freesat HD

Tested: Issue 180
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



SAMSUNG
50in → PS50A556
£1,000 Approx



Bargain-priced monster screen with a few caveats

Highs: Superb specification; great build quality; sharp detail

Lows: Some motion artefacts and noise visible

→ Specifications

Full HD: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 3
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes

Tested: Issue 161
For more info visit:
www.samsung.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

PANASONIC
50in → TX-P50VT20
£2,000 Approx



The arrival of Panasonic's first 3DTV was always going to get the AV juices running, and this 50in plasma doesn't disappoint. 3D Blu-ray material comes over sharp, smooth and crosstalk-free, while Sky's half-resolution 3D preview channel is revelatory, with sports coverage in particular showing excellent depth and detail. Other highlights of this surprisingly affordable 3D set include the two pairs of supplied eyewear, class-leading 2D hi-def picture performance, and savvy networking skills.

Tested: Issue 183
For more info visit: www.panasonic.co.uk

→ Specifications

Full HD: yes (up to 1080p)
Native resolution: 1,920 x 1,080
No. of HDMI inputs: 4 (v1.4)
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Freeview HD and Freesat HD



Blu-ray players

Best on test...



DENON
Blu-ray → DVD-A1UD
£4,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Reference universal Blu-ray player that sets new standards

Highs: Stunning lifelike picture; genuine hi-fi sound; awesome DVD upscaling

Lows: Complex to set up; not for those on a budget!

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: Yes/Yes
Networkability: Ethernet

Tested: Issue 178
For more info visit:
www.denon.co.uk



SAMSUNG
Blu-ray → BD-C6900
£350 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Early adopters will love this 3D Blu-ray player

Highs: 3D compatibility; video quality; USB file support

Lows: v1.4 HDMI output means hookup to older AVRs will be via 7.1 outputs

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet; wi-fi; USB

Tested: Issue 181
For more info visit:
www.samsung.co.uk



SONY
Blu-ray → BDP-S570
£230 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

3D Blu-ray spinner is packed with features

Highs: SACD playback; BBC iPlayer onboard

Lows: No multichannel phono outputs means you'll need a v1.4 AVR for 3D lossless audio

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: No (stereo only)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: Yes/No
Networkability: Ethernet; wi-fi; USB; iPlayer, LOVEFILM

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.sony.co.uk



LG
Blu-ray → BD570
£200 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

LG's new deck is an ideal media player-come-BD deck

Highs: Media streaming and networking; disc loading speed; integrated wi-fi

Lows: No internal memory for BD-Live; UI has inconsistencies

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: No (stereo only)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet; wi-fi; USB

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk



PANASONIC
Blu-ray → DMP-BDT300
£400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

3D BD deck to work in tandem with the brand's 3D plasmas

Highs: Solid AV performance; 3D material is sharp, smooth and involving; twin HDMI outputs

Lows: wi-fi is by dongle only

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet; optional wi-fi dongle; USB; SD slot

Tested: Issue 183
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

SONY
Blu-ray → BDP-S370 → £150 Approx

1 2 3 4 5



The first of Sony's 2010 Blu-ray players to come through the HCC Tech Labs has left us dying to see the higher-end models. This entry-level £150 machine is an absolute AV bargain, blowing its sub-£200 rivals out of the water thanks to its superb XMB control interface, BBC iPlayer and LOVEFiLM online access, Super Audio CD playback and, of course, quality HD video and audio performance. More proof that the Big S's Blu-ray focus is more than just the PS3.

Tested: Issue 184
For more info visit: www.sony.co.uk

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: No (stereo only)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/Yes
Networkability: Ethernet; Wi-Fi; 2 x USB; Bravia Internet Video
BBC iPlayer, LOVEFiLM, YouTube, etc

Also recommended



PIONEER
Blu-ray → BDP-LX52
£500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Stripped-down LX-branded player is a mid-range marvel

Highs: Class-leading picture and sound

Lows: Not simple to get to grips with; multichannel PQLS function only works on LPCM

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: No (stereo only)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet for BD-Live; USB

Tested: Issue 176
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk



PANASONIC
Blu-ray → DMP-BD85
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

New top-of-the line deck – until the 3D player arrives...

Highs: Overall picture and sound performance; 'Tube' sound emulator for CDs

Lows: Somewhat sluggish menus; wi-fi via dongle only

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet; wi-fi via dongle; SD card slot; 2 x USB

Tested: Issue 180
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO
Blu-ray → Azur 650BD
£400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

First deck from UK brand is a solid performer – and multiregion DVD, too

Highs: Bulletproof build; excellent AV performance

Lows: No 'net features

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: Yes/Yes
Networkability: Ethernet for BD-Live; 2 x USB

Tested: Issue 184
For more info visit:
www.cambridgeaudio.com

Recorders

Best on test...



PHILIPS
Freeview HD PVR →
HDT 8520
£250 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Sets a high standard for user-friendliness

Highs: Good quality HD and SD pics; cutting-edge looks

Lows: No multimedia functions; EPG can be frustrating

→ Specifications

HDD size: 500GB
Twin tuners: Yes,
Freeview HD
HDMI: Yes, with
1080p upscaling
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.philips.co.uk



HUMAX
Freeview HD PVR →
HDR-FOX T2
£330 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

The pick of the new Freeview HD PVRs so far

Highs: Joy to use; multimedia talent; great performance

Lows: Cramped remote control; can't trim recordings

→ Specifications

HDD size: 500GB
Twin tuners: Yes,
Freeview HD
HDMI: Yes, with
1080p upscaling
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 187
For more info visit:
www.humaxdigital.com/uk



SAGEM
PVR → DTR67500T
£180 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

500GB Freeview+ PVR with USB archiving

Highs: Large HDD; flexible and intuitive EPG; picture quality is excellent

Lows: No way of importing recordings from other devices

→ Specifications

HDD size: 500GB
Twin tuners: Yes, Freeview
HDMI: Yes
Component output: Yes

Tested: Issue 173
For more info visit:
www.sagem.com/uk



DIGITALSTREAM
Freeview HD PVR →
DHR8203U
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Versatile Freeview HD PVR from little-known Korean brand

Highs: Build quality; user interface; CI slot; plays JPEGs and MPEGs

Lows: Below-par SD pics

→ Specifications

HDD size: 500GB
Twin tuners: Yes,
Freeview HD
HDMI: Yes, with 1080p
upscaling
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.dstreamtech.com



GRUNDIG
Freesat PVR →
GUFSDTR500HD
£280 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Dual-tuner Freesat+ PVR with capacious 500GB HDD

Highs: Easy to use; cool-running; efficient upscaling of non-HD channels

Lows: USB port is disabled

→ Specifications

HDD size: 500GB
Twin tuners: Yes, Freesat HD
HDMI: Yes
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.grundig.co.uk

Also recommended



PIONEER
DVDR → DVR-560HX
£400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Full PC-linked multimedia jukebox and DVD/HDD unit

Highs: Excellent AV performance and features spread; networkability

Lows: Jukebox abilities reliant on Windows Media Player

→ Specifications

HDD size: 160GB
Twin tuners: Yes, digital and analogue
HDMI: Yes
Component output: Yes
Camcorder input: Yes
Format: -R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM
Dual-layer recording: Yes

Tested: Issue 159
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk



PANASONIC
DVDR → DMR-EX773
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

DVD/HDD recorder that misses out on Freeview HD

Highs: Solid AV performance; heaps of features and recording flexibility

Lows: No infra-red control over STB; single Freeview tuner only

→ Specifications

HDD size: 160GB
Twin tuners: No, single digital only
HDMI: Yes
Component output: Yes
Camcorder input: No – USB/SD via USB instead
Format: -R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM
Dual-layer recording: Yes

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



SAGEMCOM
Freeview HD PVR →
RT190-320 T2 HD
£250 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

First Freeview HD PVR from the Sagem rebrand

Highs: Good quality HD and SD pics; picture window in EPG

Lows: Antediluvian UI; sluggish menu system; ugly LED display

→ Specifications

HDD size: 320GB
Twin tuners: Yes,
Freeview HD
HDMI: Yes, with
1080p upscaling
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.sagemcomdigital.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

PANASONIC
DVD/BDR → DMR-BW880 → £800 Approx

1 2 3 4 5



Panasonic has followed last year's award-winning twin Freesat HD/Blu-ray recorder with this Freeview HD model. Again sporting a 500GB HDD, Profile 2.0 Blu-ray player/recorder and Viera Cast online interactivity, this deck solidifies Panasonic's status as the kings of convergence. Blu-ray playback is first-rate, and as a PVR the BW880 is unique in its flexibility. Other goodies, including Gracenote compatibility, DLNA certification, DV, SD and USB inputs add to its appeal. Not cheap, but true quality often isn't.

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit: www.panasonic.co.uk

→ Specifications

Hard disk: 500GB
Twin Tuners: Yes 2 x Freeview HD
Component output: No
Format: BD-RE, BD-R, DVD-R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM
Dual-layer recording: Yes

AV receivers

Best on test...



NAD
Amp/Processor
M25/M15HD
£6,600 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Classy heavyweight combo

Highs: Innovative modular design; excellent performance
Lows: No XLR jacks

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 160W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: No
Component input: 3
HDMI: 4-in, 1-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 183
For more info visit:
nadelectronics.com



MARANTZ
AVR → SR7005
£1,400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Marantz finally shakes off its 2-channel bias with this stonking multichannel marvel

Highs: Effortlessly achieves superb detail; great value
Lows: Lacks 9-ch output; not THX rated; tricky to set LFE

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 125W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM/net)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: No
Component input: 4
HDMI: 6-in, 2-out (v1.4a)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 187
For more info visit:
www.marantz.co.uk



ONKYO
AVR → TX-NR5007
£2,200 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

A 9.2-channel HD receiver with exhaustive features and power

Highs: First-class home cinema performance; processing allows 9-channel height/width audio
Lows: No proprietary anti-jitter tech, wi-fi or secondary remote

→ Specifications

Power: 9 x 220W (6Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM/net)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: Yes, Ultra2 Plus
Component input: 3
HDMI: 8-in, 2-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 180
For more info visit:
www.eu.onkyo.com



ONKYO
Amp/Processor
PR-SC5500/PA-MC5500
£3,600 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Onkyo's separates system delivers on all AV fronts

Highs: Massive power reserves; smooth AV performance
Lows: Sizeable and weighty

→ Specifications

Power: 9 x 220W (6Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (FM/AM/net)
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: Ultra2
Component input: 3
HDMI: 8-in, 2-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.eu.onkyo.com



PIONEER
AVR → SC-LX83
£2,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Pioneer's top-flight AVR mixes power, control and usability

Highs: Punchy, detailed, expansive sound; iControl app is superb; MCACC setup; RF remote handset
Lows: Seven-channel only

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 190W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: Yes, Ultra2 Plus
Component input: 3
HDMI: 6-in, 2-out
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

DENON
AVR → AVR-4810
£2,800 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Denon's AVR-4810 is the current king of the new breed of receivers that make all sorts of speaker configurations possible. Thanks to Audyssey DSX and Dolby Pro-Logic IIz processing, it's capable of driving an 11.3-channel system (with the aid of an extra stereo amp), and it'll have you re-arranging your speakers in no time. Beyond this mastery of new formats, the AVR-4810 delivers a rich, powerful sound and a full suite of features from Net radio and integrated wi-fi to a wide choice of inputs and four-zone multiroom. Brilliant.

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit: www.denon.co.uk

→ Specifications

Power: 9 x 140W (8Ω)
Upscaling to HDMI: Yes
Tuner: AM/FM/Net
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD: Yes/Yes
Zone 2: Yes and 3 & 4
Serial port control: Yes, 2
THX certification: No
Component input: 3
HDMI: 6-in, 2-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)



Also recommended...



SONY
AVR → STR-DH810
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Feature-packed HDMI v1.4 AVR at a bargain price

Highs: Value for money; Dolby Pro-Logic IIz; immersive and realistic soundstage
Lows: Not great at high volumes; limited in power

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 100W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: No, unless you use S-Air wireless speakers
Serial port control: No
THX certification: No
Component input: 3
HDMI: 4-in, 1-out (v1.4)
Multichannel input: No

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.sony.co.uk



ONKYO
AVR → TX-SR608
£450 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

The 3D-capable AVR delivers great value for money

Highs: Appealing price tag; big, fast, dynamic sound; solid video scaling
Lows: No networking or USB functionality; uninspiring build

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 160W (6Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes
Serial port control: No
THX certification: Select2 Plus
Component input: 2
HDMI: 6-in, 1-out (v1.4a)
Multichannel input: No

Tested: Issue 184
For more info visit:
www.eu.onkyo.com



YAMAHA
AVR → RX-V2065
£850 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

New-look Yamaha receiver is a great sub-£1K all-rounder

Highs: Superb networking prowess; wonderful natural sound that suits all material
Lows: GUI takes some getting used to

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 130W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM/net)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: No
Component input: 2
HDMI: 5-in, 2-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit:
www.yamaha.co.uk

Projectors

Best on test...



INFOCUS
DLP → ScreenPlay SP8602
£3,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

New-look DLP projector from a much-revered brand

Highs: Excellent picture quality; good range of adjustments; different 'skins'
Lows: Not as flexible to set up as some; slightly noisy runner

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 3
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 1,300 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 5,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 2,500hrs
Fan noise: NA
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.infocus.com



VIVITEK
DLP → H1085
£1,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

A brilliant full HD projector at a mouth-watering price

Highs: Rich colours; excellent image tweaks; 12V trigger
Lows: Noisy runner in high brightness mode; some low-level noise in darker scenes

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 2,000 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 5,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000hrs
Fan noise: 26dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit:
www.vivitekcorp.com



RUNCO
DLP → LS-5
£7,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

High-end CI projection for the mass market

Highs: Excellent contrast and colour response; superbly sharp images; minimal rainbow effect
Lows: Noisy runner

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 2
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 800 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 15,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 2,000 to 4,000hrs
Fan noise: 30dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 187
For more info visit:
www.pulsemarketing.org



EPSON
LCD → EH-TW5500
£4,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Epson's flagship home cinema projector does LCD proud

Highs: Lots of features; easy and flexible to setup; produces the finest LCD pictures yet
Lows: More expensive than rivals; can lose focus a little

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 1,600 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 200,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000hrs
Fan noise: 22dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 181
For more info visit:
www.epson.co.uk



PANASONIC
LCD → PT-AE4000
£2,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Updated flagship PJ adds red-rich lamp and 12V trigger

Highs: Smooth filmic pictures; easy to setup and use; handy feature set
Lows: Boxy design; be careful with high frame-rate settings

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 1,600 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 100,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 2,000 hours
Fan noise: 22dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 177
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk

Also recommended...



BENQ
DLP → W1000
£1,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

A £1K full HD projector with good colour presets

Highs: Very sharp HD pictures; alluring tactile finish; plenty of fine-tuning options
Lows: Rainbow effect; noticeable fan noise

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 2,000 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 3,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000hrs
Fan noise: 27dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit:
benq.co.uk



OPTOMA
DLP → HD20
£900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Wallet-friendly model is an ideal first projector

Highs: Excellent detail resolution; reasonable contrast and brightness
Lows: Some fan noise; rainbow effect; limited throw distance

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 1,700 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 500:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000hrs
Fan noise: 29dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 176
For more info visit:
www.optoma.co.uk



VIVITEK
DLP → H9080FD
£10,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

The world's first 'lampless' LED projector

Highs: Excellent colour fidelity; great definition; long lifespan
Lows: Lacks brightness; early adopters pay for the innovative LED tech

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: No, use HDMI instead for PC hookup
Brightness (claimed): 1,000 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 15,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000hrs
Fan noise: N/A
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 173
For more info visit:
www.vivitekcorp.com

Editor's Choice...

JVC
D-ILA → HD950
£6,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5



Put simply, JVC's video-chucker is capable of an awe-inspiring performance. Spin up a Blu-ray and you'll be rewarded with three-dimensional, natural-looking pictures that are packed with detail, shadow subtlety and vibrant colours. Setting up the HD950 is made easy by its fully-motorised optical adjustments, and a THX-certified colour preset for those not wanting to get their hands dirty in its extensive calibration menus. It's an almost silent runner, too. The best PJ we've yet seen at this price point – and the recent HD990 upgrade improves on it even more!

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit: www.jvc.co.uk

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 900 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 50,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 3,000hrs
Fan noise: 19dB
24fps: Yes

Speaker systems

Best on test...



MONITOR AUDIO
5.1 → Platinum PL200AV
£11,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Gorgeous-looking, hi-tech 5.1 system for serious cinema

Highs: Dynamic, engaging sound with pin-sharp detail; taut, powerful bass; excellent build

Lows: Base plinths seem to belong to another design

→ Specifications

Power handling: 2 x 250W, 2 x 120W, 1 x 100W
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 1 x 1,000W
Finish: Gloss; Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 184

For more info visit:
www.monitoraudio.com



CRYSTAL ACOUSTICS
5.1 → TX-T2-12
£1,300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Great value THX Ultra2-certified array with a classy finish

Highs: Impressive full-range scale and power from relatively small speakers

Lows: Brash and unsubtle; not so good at low volumes

→ Specifications

Power handling: 2 x 150W, 3 x 100W
Rears: Dipoles
Subwoofer: 200W
Finish: Gloss Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 185

For more info visit:
www.crystallaudiovideo.com



ACOUSTIC ENERGY
5.1 → AEGIS Neo V2
£1,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Superior £1K system is excellent value for money

Highs: Classy build; dynamic, detailed and exciting audio performance; quality subwoofer

Lows: Sub controls may be daunting for beginners

→ Specifications

Power handling: 5 x 120W
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 200W
Finish: Wood; Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 184

For more info visit:
www.acoustic-energy.co.uk



BOWERS & WILKINS
5.1 → CM Series
£4,250 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Top quality 5.1 array in a classical wood finish

Highs: True sweet highs from hi-tech tweeters; brilliant 10in woofer; solid construction

Lows: Square-edge design not exactly high-end

→ Specifications

Power handling: 3 x 200W, 2 x 120W
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 500W
Finish: Wood; Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 179

For more info visit:
www.bowers-wilkins.com



TEUFEL
5.1 → System 8 THX Ultra2
£2,700 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

5.1 system with THX Ultra2 certification

Highs: Full fat THX performance at a low-price; huge, potent subwoofer

Lows: Mail order only means there's no chance to try before you buy

→ Specifications

Power handling: 3 x 120W, 2 x 80W
Rears: Dipole
Subwoofer: 600W
Finish: Gloss; Bookshelf: Yes

Tested: Issue 181

For more info visit:
www.teufel.eu

Also recommended...



KLIPSCH
5.1 → Icon system
£2,700 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Sleek-looking US-made system with horn technology

Highs: High-quality audio; excellent value for money; clever, simple-to-use subwoofer

Lows: Not suited to largescale home cinema rooms

→ Specifications

Power handling: 2 x 125W, 2 x 75W, 1 x 100
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 300W
Finish: Gloss; Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 180

For more info visit:
www.klipsch.co.uk



MONITOR AUDIO
5.1 → Silver RX6 AV12s
£2,200 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Gorgeous-looking, hi-tech 5.1 system for serious cinema

Highs: Dynamic, engaging sound with pin-sharp detail; taut, powerful bass; excellent build

Lows: Base plinths seem to belong to another design

→ Specifications

Power handling: 3 x 125, 1 x 80W; Rears: Dipolar
Subwoofer: 1 x 500W
Finish: Gloss;
Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 184

For more info visit:
www.monitoraudio.com



Q ACOUSTICS
5.1 → 2000 Series
£550 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Excellent 5.1 sub/sat system with living-room friendly looks

Highs: Detailed, compact satellites; alternative finishes/supports; tweakable sub

Lows: Slightly rough sound when extended; lack of high-frequency subtlety

→ Specifications

Power handling: 4 x 75W, 1 x 100W; Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 140W
Finish: Gloss;
Bookshelf: Yes

Tested: Issue 185

For more info visit:
www.qacoustics.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

KEF
5.1 → XQ Series
£5,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

This KEF 5.1 array mixes standmount surrounds with two hulking floorstanders to deliver a massive cinematic audio experience that's hard to fault – an ideal blend of deep bass, spacious mid-band and crystal clear treble. The design is gorgeous, too – another KEF masterclass in gloss black cabinets (curved to reduce internal reflections) and clearly taking a lead from the brand's awe-inspiring Reference system. Other variants of the speakers are available, so you can spec a more affordable, smaller room setup should you wish.

Tested: Issue 174

For more info visit: www.kef.com/gb

→ Specifications

Power handling: 2 x 200W, 2 x 120W, 1 x 150W
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 1 x 200W
Finish: Gloss
Bookshelf: No chance

Subwoofers

Best on test...



NAIM
SW → n-Sub
£1,600 Approx



Class AB amp-driven, premium-level subwoofer

Highs: Rich, textured bass with tight control; innovative features

Lows: High-end rivals have a bit more grunt to 'em

→ Specifications

Frequency response: 20Hz-250Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 350W
Driver: 12in
Weight: 29.6kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: Yes
Remote control: Yes

Tested: Issue 177
For more info visit:
www.naim-audio.com



POLK AUDIO
SW → DSW microPRO 2000
£1,200 Approx



Massively potent stealth sub with excellent set-up features

Highs: Huge sound; easy to use controls; automated room EQ

Lows: Other 8in subs are far more affordable

→ Specifications

Frequency response: 22Hz-200Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 1,200W
Driver: 8in
Weight: 15.4kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: Yes
Remote control: Yes

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.polkaudio.com



PARADIGM
SW → Signature Sub 2
£7,250 Approx



Reference grade sub for serious installs only

Highs: Astonishing power, control and speed; build quality is first rate

Lows: Can you afford one?

→ Specifications

Frequency response: 7Hz-150Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 4,500W
Driver: 6 x 10in
Weight: 105.7kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: No
Remote control: No

Tested: Issue 183
For more info visit:
www.paradigm.com



TANNOY
SW → TS1201
£600 Approx



12in sub with simultaneous LFE and speaker level inputs

Highs: Smart looks; ease of use; real weight and presence

Lows: Remote control will cost you extra

→ Specifications

Frequency response: Down to 21Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 500W
Driver: 12in
Weight: 16.7kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: Yes
Remote control: No

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit:
www.tannoy.com



REL
SW → T3
£430 Approx



Great value-for-money small-scale subwoofer

Highs: Superb performance from such a small unit

Lows: Dual input system may irritate some

→ Specifications

Frequency response: 30-120Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 150W
Driver: 8in
Weight: 12.5kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: No
Remote control: No

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.rel.net

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AWARDS 2010

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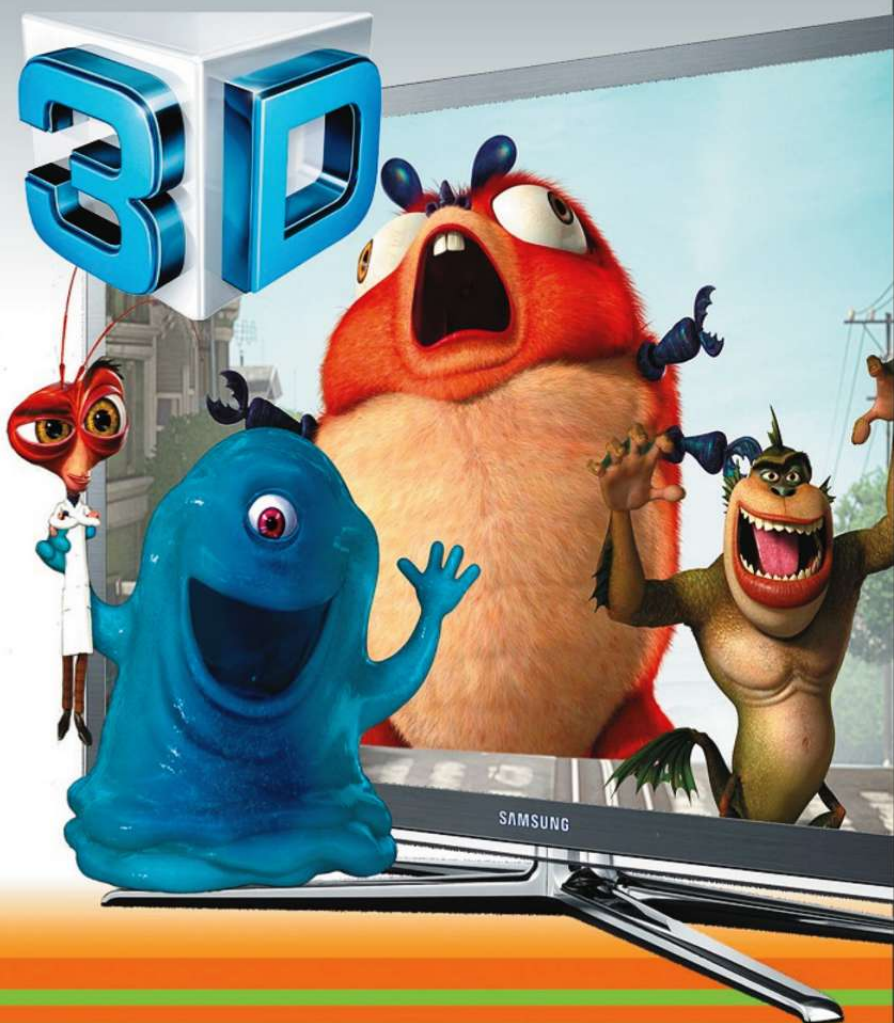
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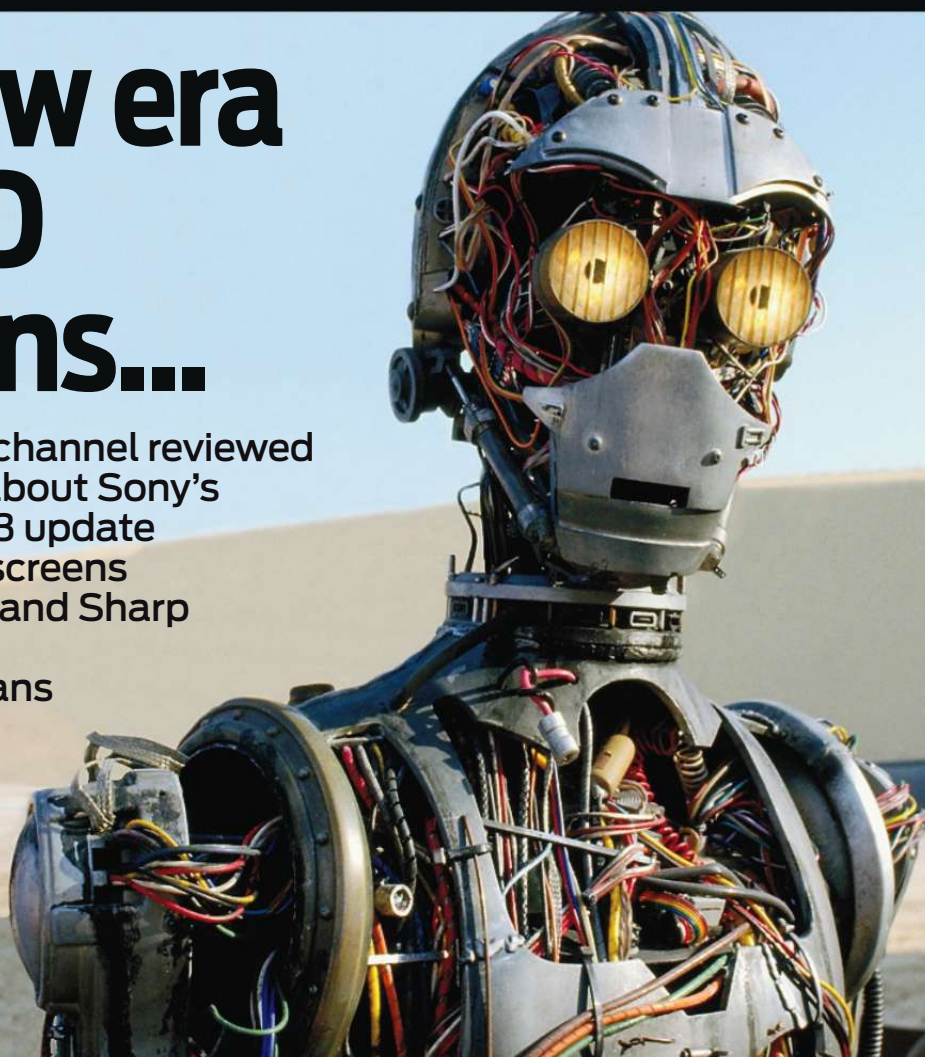
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